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BERNARD SHAW: A CHRONICLE AND  
AN INTRODUCTION



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Printed in Great Britain by the KEMP HALL PRESS, LTD.  
in the City of Oxford

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I AM deeply indebted to Mr. Shaw for his kind permission to make quotations from his writings—especially, because of their comparative length, those from his letters to Ellen Terry and *Common Sense About the War*.

Among the number of people who have written about Mr. Shaw, only one is his authorized biographer and has been supplied by Mr. Shaw with the very generous help which he (rightly) deemed due. Dr. Henderson produced a large and handsomely illustrated biography in 1911; he acquired the finest collection of Shaviana in the world; he wrote all over the world for information. One can imagine the difficulty of digesting all this material, determining the proportions of the various elements in the history, and so on. Dr. Henderson in 1932 produced a volume of 800 pages incorporating the result of all these labours in a most readable narrative. All readers of his volumes are under great obligation to him, and I am particularly so, as I also am for his kind permission to quote.

I am very grateful also to the following for the same permission: The Fabian Society, in respect of *Fabian Essays* and their tracts; Miss Doris Langley Moore and Messrs. Ernest Benn & Co. in respect of *E. Nesbit*; Lady Keeble (Lillah McCarthy), in respect of *Myself*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*and My Friends*; Mrs. Nellie Harris, in respect of *Bernard Shaw*, by the late Frank Harris; Professor Gilbert Murray, in respect of his *Aristophanes*; and Mr. St. John Ervine, in respect of his *Observer* review of Dr. Henderson's recent Life.

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## REFERENCES

REFERENCES to "Henderson, 1911" are to *George Bernard Shaw*, by Archibald Henderson (Hurst and Blackett), 1911. References to "Henderson, 1932," are to *Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet*, Appleton, 1932.

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References to other books are given in full in footnotes.



SHAW's maternal grandfather married a second time when his daughter was grown up. On the wedding morning he was arrested for debt on the suit of his first wife's brother. As the latter had learnt of the marriage from a letter from Shaw's mother (as she was to be), she was blamed for the arrest, and her father, in Shaw's words, "made her position so unpleasant that she married my father to escape from it."<sup>1</sup> She was twenty years younger than her husband, the daughter of a small country gentleman—Lucinda Elizabeth Gurley. She was a woman of extraordinary mental vigour, emancipated, humane, able. Her interests lay outside the home and she was incommoded by displays of family affection. She was an artist in singing, and she gave herself up to her art.

The Shaws were a family quite out of the ordinary. They claim descent from Shaigh, third son of the Macduff who figures in the story of Macbeth. After his time they became domiciled in Hampshire, and then, towards the end of the seventeenth century, moved to Ireland, where they intermarried with local families. Shaw is, of course, a "red Kelt." His ancestry was a mixing of the two races so important to us in ethnological history, the Mediterranean and the Nordic. It seems to be true that the former is sensitive, shy, artistic, mentally nimble, and the

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Henderson, quoted in catalogue of Henderson's *Shaviana*, p. 40.

latter melancholy and practical. These races in Shaw seem to have expressed themselves separately sometimes in him, for example in *John Bull's Other Island* we feel that both Laurence Doyle and Keegan are in him. Traits of the Scotch, English, and Irish nationalities, moreover, can be traced in him.

Shaw's immediate senior relatives on his father's side were extraordinary people. They were small Irish gentry; poor, but keeping up the family pride; but this pride did not prevent among them a hilarious sense of humour and its hilarious expression (although Shaw's father's generation were second cousins to a baronet!). His father was an employee at the law courts. He retired with a pension, realized it in cash, and became a grain merchant, without any knowledge whatsoever of the trade; he seems to have done this in a spirit of levity which was amused by his own outrageous unfitness for his new life. His income was two or three hundred a year, on which he tried to keep up family pride, and was (interestingly enough like Dickens's father) always expecting something to turn up.

In the words of his son, "he was of sardonic mien, this concealing a profound sensibility." In relation to his sensitiveness, it is not unworthy of note that he inherited a family squint. That the squint mattered is proved by the fact that it was operated on—by the father of Oscar Wilde, who made it worse in the opposite direction. It may be suggested that his sensitiveness it was that had led to the building up of

the protection corresponding to the sardonic mien and the tragic sense of humour. Shaw has paid him a moving tribute, woven round the fact that he was a man of really profound humility. In the circumstances of his life and marriage we have not to go far to discover the explanation of the fact recorded by Shaw of his father that “in theory he was an ardent teetotaller but in practice he was often a secret drinker.”

Shaw was born on July 26, 1856, and he was given the names George Bernard. He had two sisters, Agnes and Lucy.

The state of matters into which Shaw was born, although he had the advantage that his mother believed in allowing children to be free and so did his father, constituted what would appear to be an untoward environment. Writing of his father to Ellen Terry in 1897, Shaw said, “One night, when I was still about as tall as his boots, he took me out for a walk. In the course of it I conceived a monstrous, incredible suspicion. When I got home, I stole to my mother, and in an awestruck whisper said to her, ‘Mamma, I think Papa’s drunk.’ She turned away with impatient disgust and said, ‘When is he ever anything else?’ . . . Oh, a devil of a childhood, Ellen, rich only in dreams and loveless in realities. . . . I am afraid that though I was not ill treated—my parents being quite incapable of any sort of inhumanity—the fact that nobody cared for me particularly gave me a frightful self-sufficiency, or rather a power of starving on imaginary feasts.’” The intellectual was his means of salvation and he

suffered from the fact that, to adapt words of his own, his very love got knit into an intellectual fabric that wounded when he meant it to caress.<sup>1</sup> In his novel, *Love Among the Artists*, Shaw wrote of the "hard lesson" "that is inevitably forced on every sensitive but unlovable boy who has had his own way to make and who knows that, outside himself, there is no God to help him"—the lesson of learning to stand alone in the world.

There was in Dublin a musical genius, called Lee, who produced operas, and Shaw's mother was his leading lady. Lee came to live with the Shaws, paying more than his share of the expense of the establishment. As Shaw's biographer, Henderson, has well put it, the atmosphere in which Shaw lived was full of "artistic actinic rays: the invigorating ozone of criticism, musical appreciation, and high performance. This 'blameless *ménage à trois*' was free of any suggestion of sex." Shaw was profoundly influenced by music. As in the case of Samuel Butler, it has been the dominant influence in his life. He once said: "In music you will find the body and reality of that feeling which the mere novelist can only describe to you: there will come home to your senses something in which you can actually experience the candour and gallant impulse of the hero, the grace and trouble of the heroine, and the extracted emotional quintessence of their love."<sup>2</sup> He was, of

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Ellen Terry, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> According to Lillah McCarthy, Shaw always declared that his master in drama was Mozart. (*Myself and My Friends*, p. 82.)

course, also influenced by the libretti of the operas.

His environment in the wider sense corresponded in some respects to England in the seventeenth century. There was the bitter feud between the Catholics and the Protestants. The Protestant church with which Shaw was connected through his parents was to him as dust and ashes in the mouth. On the other hand the English of Dublin was in its Augustan phase and Shaw thus imbibed a distinction of literary style.

His first literary effort, contributed for publication, that we know of, was a short story sent to a boys' journal : it dealt with piracy and highway robbery and had as a leading character a wicked baritone in opera.

His first teacher was an uncle, a clergyman. Later he was sent to a school, nominally Wesleyan—but the only significance in the title was its Protestantism. Here he at least got interested in the stories of the Iliad and the Odyssey. But he was not a good school boy. He often truanted. But he was left very free. A favourite place of his resort was the Irish National Gallery, where he studied pictures with his fresh mind and was stimulated to read Vasari. He was especially interested in Italian and Flemish art. He has written, “I have been influenced mainly by works of art in my artificial culture, and have always been more *consciously* susceptible to music and painting than to literature, so that Mozart and Michelangelo count for a good deal in the making of my mind.” Here again, in pictorial art as the second influence, is a salient similarity to the case of Samuel Butler.

Shaw dominated schoolfellows by his power of telling stories and his courage in calling their bluff when physical violence was threatened, although Shaw was not physically courageous.

It was while he was still the youthful student of art (the late Mr. Frank Harris said that Shaw in his youth in Dublin wanted to be a painter—another likeness to Butler) that he became aware of the “dawn of the moral passion.” The impression remained deep that not only is there such a thing as moral passion but that it can be at least as strong as any other passion.

By the age of fifteen, Shaw “knew at least one important work by Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi, and Gounod, from cover to cover, and enough of a considerable number of painters to recognize their work at sight.”

When he was fifteen, he became office boy to a prominent firm of Dublin estate agents. In this year, 1871—in September and in the *Vaudeville Magazine*—appeared the following reply to a correspondent, who was the youthful Shaw: “You should have registered your letter: such a combination of wit and satire ought not to have been conveyed at the ordinary rate of postage. As it was, your arguments were so weighty that we had to pay twopence extra.”

Shaw’s father’s drinking caused the family to be dropped socially, and Shaw did not have the experience of social intercourse in this sense and lacked education

in social manners. A fit stopped his father taking alcohol.

In the following year, Lee, the musician, went to London. The financial situation of the Shaw family thus becoming impossible, Mrs. Shaw went to London, taking her daughters with her. Shaw's father and he went into lodgings in Dublin. Shaw, being deprived of music in his home, set himself to learn to play the piano—and began by sitting down to play an opera. (This method can be wiser than it sounds. Rabindranath Tagore as a boy, having refused a tutor after one day's trial, learnt English by simply reading English novels.) Shaw acquired proficiency which was to stand him in good stead at a later stage in his career.

Through the libretti of operas he extended his acquaintance with literature. Thus he got to know Victor Hugo and Schiller through Donizetti, Verdi, and Beethoven; Goethe through Schumann; Beaumarchais and Molière through Mozart; Mérimée through Bizet; and Berlioz proved an unconscious interpreter of E. A. Poe.

He had a friend from schooldays called McNulty,<sup>1</sup> and when the latter removed to a distant place, there ensued an immense correspondence between them, including sketches, drama, etc. This was greatly useful in the development of Shaw.

Speaking of this time in his life in notes which

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards noted as the author of three original and remarkable novels of Irish life published by Arnold of London.

Shaw was kind enough to write on a syllabus of lectures I issued, he said, "I was a horribly shy and diffident young man, producing an impression of brazen impudence because, I suppose, the ability of which I was unconscious asserted itself through the disadvantages and the ignorance of which I was too conscious."

Such a one is bound to be an ugly duckling, misunderstood. This, coupled with the intuition of real superiority, is bound to produce a certain amount of friction. Shaw himself wrote, "My people knew me too well on my worst side and not at all on my best." And in *Man and Superman* he wrote, "When you go to heaven, Ann, you will be frightfully conscious of your wings for the first year or so. When you meet your relatives there, and they persist in treating you as if you were still a mortal, you will not be able to bear them. You will try and get into a circle which has never known you except as an angel."

Shaw has had a natural sympathy with childhood and youth that kick over the traces. Reacting against the senior who says, "Ah, young man, so I thought when I was your age," he vowed the vow (we infer from his writings) that always would he be faithful on principle to the young man's enthusiasms of his youth. Shaw, says his biographer, has had a passion for the contemporaneous, and he himself has said that the only way to keep young is to harbour young and vigorous thoughts, which may be trusted to find vigorous expression. There is no doubt that this

practice has enabled Shaw to keep ahead of his time. (On occasion, it may be suggested, it has led him too far—to take up things merely because they were the fashion of youth.)

In the office of the estate agent<sup>1</sup> in which Shaw worked, a young man one day remarked that every fellow thinks he is going to be a great man until he is twenty. Shaw, telling this to his biographer, Henderson, said, "The shock that this gave me made me suddenly aware that this was my own precise intention."

The work in the office was rich in opportunities of insight into society and its workings. One of Shaw's duties was to collect weekly rents, ranging from a shilling to half-a-crown, from a dozen houses. He became so efficient at his work that, in spite of his extreme youth, he was, in an emergency, promoted to be cashier. He felt obliged to don a morning-coat suit to look impressive enough, but he retained the post with credit. "On fifty estates," wrote the late Frank Harris, "he had to pay head rents, quit rents, mortgage interests, jointures, annuities, insurance premiums, and what not."

An important friendship was that with Bell, a relative of Bell the famous telephone inventor. Shaw and he began together the study of Italian, but more important was his influence in leading Shaw to study physics and pathology, and so lay the foundations of his scientific training and knowledge. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> His name was Townshend, which is interesting in view of the fact that Shaw was to marry a Miss Payne Townshend, also Irish.

Bell was musical, and so far ahead of his contemporaries that he knew something of and appreciated Wagner as a great composer. Under this lead Shaw bought a vocal score of *Lohengrin*—the only one available in the Dublin shops.

In 1875, when Shaw was eighteen, Moody and Sankey, the famous evangelists, visited Dublin and made a great impression. In *Public Opinion* appeared the following letter:

SIR,

In reply to your correspondent “ J.R.D.,” as to the effect of the “ wave of evangelism,” I beg to offer the following observations on the late “ revival ” in Dublin, of which I was a witness.

As the enormous audiences drawn to the evangelistic services have been referred to as a proof of their efficacy, I will enumerate some of the motives which induced people to go. It will be seen that they were not of a religious, but a secular, not to say profane, character.

Predominant was the curiosity excited by the great reputation of the evangelists, and the stories, widely circulated, of the summary annihilation by epilepsy and otherwise of sceptics who had openly proclaimed their doubts of Mr. Moody’s divine mission.

Another motive exhibits a peculiar side of human nature. The services took place in the Exhibition Building, the entry to which was connected in the public mind with the expenditure of a certain sum of money. But Messrs. Moody and Sankey opened the building “ for nothing,” and the novelty, combined with the curiosity, made the attraction irresistible.

I mention these influences particularly as I believe they have been hitherto almost ignored. The audiences were, as a rule, respectable; and as Mr. Moody’s

orations were characterized by an excess of vehement assertion and a total absence of logic, respectable audiences were precisely those which were least likely to derive any benefit from them.

It is to the rough, to the outcasts of the streets, that such "awakenings" should be addressed; and those members of the aristocracy who by their presence tend to raise the meetings above the sphere of such outcasts, are merely diverting the evangelistic vein into channels where it is wasted, its place being already supplied, and as, in the dull routine of hard work, novelty has a special attraction for the poor, I think it would be well for clergymen, who are nothing if not conspicuous, to render themselves so in this instance by their absence.

The unreasoning mind of the people is too apt to connect a white tie with a dreary church service, capped by a sermon of platitudes, and is more likely to appreciate "the gift of the gab"—the possession of which by Mr. Moody nobody will deny—than that of the Apostolic Succession, which he lacks.

Respecting the effect of the revival on individuals I may mention that it has a tendency to make them highly objectionable members of society, and induces their unconverted friends to desire a speedy reaction, which either soon takes place or the revived one relapses slowly into his previous benighted condition as the effect fades, and although many young men have been snatched from careers of dissipation by Mr. Moody's exhortations, it remains doubtful whether the change is not merely in the nature of the excitement rather than in the moral nature of the individual. Hoping that these remarks may elucidate further opinions on the subject,

I remain, Sir, yours, etc.,

Dublin.

S.

One familiar with the early style of Samuel Butler must surely be impressed by the similarity of the above to it.

Shaw's uncles were shocked by this publication. It is evident that he was reacting against his environment. An exhibition of temper on his part is recorded of this time and it is worthy of note that the cause of it was a handsome testimonial to his success in the office.

In March, 1876, at the age of nineteen, he suddenly gave notice and left the office and went to London and joined his mother and one surviving sister, the younger sister having died just before of consumption.<sup>1</sup> His father allowed them £1 a week and they drew upon a sum of £4,000 inherited by his mother. Shaw's surviving sister was a professional singer.

The next period in Shaw's life can be explained or justified only by the theory that he had the intuition that his ability craved food, must be fed, and was of such quality as to justify his living on his mother. The late Sir Walter Raleigh in his book on Shakespeare says that occasionally a man is born who is entitled to claim exemption from the behovings of ordinary men. In fairness to Shaw it ought to be remembered that many a young person has accepted the sacrifices of poor parents while he stayed on at school and went to the university. This is really what happened in

<sup>1</sup> Is Shaw's a case of hereditary disease thinning the partition between this life and the unseen, like that of Keats and other men of letters? This consideration is not necessarily invalidated by the fact that almost every Victorian family lost a member through consumption.

Shaw's case. He said, "My mother worked for me instead of telling me to work for her." He read hard in libraries ; he studied pictures in art galleries ; he studied the best music. In essence, Shaw had a prolonged university career, only perhaps of a better kind. In the recent history of imaginative literature in English it is impressive how many of those who have attained distinction did not go to a university and how some of those who did, made little of it. Samuel Butler's view of academic training is here borne out. Professor Leacock has written of Mark Twain: "Sam Clemens had little school and no college. He thus acquired that peculiar sharpness of mind which comes from not going to school, and that power of independent thought obtained by not entering college. It was this youthful setting that enabled him to become what he was." Doubtless the ideal is a path leading through academic life while retaining mastery and original power, but this way of life is peculiarly narrow, from the nature of the case, and peculiarly few are they who find it. At any rate, Shaw's education will stand searching criticism. "When I was twenty," he said, "I knew everybody in Shakespeare from Hamlet to Abhorsen much more intimately than I knew my living acquaintances."

He went short in the material things of life. For fifteen years his dress was of the shabbiest. (In 1896, when he was forty, he said, "When people reproach me with the unfashionableness of my attire, they forget that to me it seems like Solomon in all his

glory.”) In the nine years from the age of twenty to the age of twenty-nine his literary earnings amounted to £6. He had an article on Christian names accepted by G. R. Sims for *One and All*, for which he received fifteen shillings. “Full of hope and gratitude, I wrote a really brilliant contribution. That finished me.” The remainder of Shaw’s literary earnings in those nine years was for an article on patent medicines commissioned by a friend.

One reason for Shaw’s “failure” was his *penchant* for telling the truth as he saw it. Lee, the musician friend of Shaw’s mother, tried to help him by undertaking to act as musical critic to a paper called *The Hornet*, Shaw to do all the work and take all the money. The concert agents were so incensed at Shaw’s articles that they stopped tickets and advertisements. When Wagner conducted his own music at the Albert Hall, Shaw dared to write of him as a great composer instead of denouncing him as a cacophonous charlatan. *The Hornet* failed.<sup>1</sup> It is of this time in his life that the story is told of him that when he passed an organ grinder, who held out his hat for money, Shaw said, “Press,” and passed on.

In spite of his poverty, Shaw found entrée into the better musical society of London as an accompanist. He had a dress suit. One writer on Shaw has most appositely quoted the passage from *Sartor Resartus*: “Thus, in answer to a cry for solid pudding, whereof there is most urgent need, comes, epigrammatically

<sup>1</sup> Frank Harris, *Bernard Shaw*, pp. 88-9.

enough, the invitation to a wash of quite fluid Aesthetic Tea. How our hero, now at actual grips with Destiny herself, may have comported himself among these musical and literary dilettanti of both sexes, like a hungry lion invited to a feast of chickenweed, we can only conjecture. Perhaps in expressive silence and abstinence. Otherwise, if the lion in such a case is to feed at all, it cannot be on the chickenweed, but only on the chickens." All that Shaw was given was Aesthetic Tea. But he took away with him, without their knowing it, the souls of the aesthetes.

In this period of great trial Shaw proved his probity, ability, knowledge of art, and laboriousness. Thus—truly—speaks his biographer Henderson, who proceeds, "A certain pride of birth, a consciousness of worthy ancestry, also sustained him and helped him to triumph over circumstances."

#### 1879: "IMMATURITY"

In 1879, when he was twenty-three, Shaw wrote his first novel, entitled, he has said, "with merciless fitness," *Immaturity*. He sent it the round of the publishers without success. Among the publishers' readers who rejected it was Meredith (he also rejected Samuel Butler's first book, *Erewhon*), who characteristically dismissed it with a laconic "No." *Immaturity* remained unpublished, and the manuscript was partially eaten by mice. It came to be printed only when the collected edition of Shaw's works was being prepared. In spite of its title and Shaw's

comment on it, when one read it, one was impressed not by immaturity but by maturity amazing in so young an author. The form of the novel defied the deeply entrenched expectations of novel readers of the time but anticipated in a very remarkable manner the form of novel that has come to be received in recent years. As one reviewer said, if it had been published as a Georgian novel, it would have been hailed as a masterpiece. It has nothing of the romantic plot: it projects the youthful Shaw himself imaginatively in London in a boarding-house and the people he got to know. The characterization is remarkable and constitutes real criticism of life. There is, for example, a study of an unromantic, able woman, and, on the other hand, there is the girl who is out to catch a man: "her expression, animated and pretty when she conversed with men, was peevish and wearied when she was idle among her own sex :" are there many young men of twenty-three capable of that observation? The tone of the book is that of sad observation that has made itself detached but is actuated by sympathy, albeit the sympathy of a man of ability, capable of seeing the tragedy and the pathos. Social (as distinct from sociological) criticism comes up. What is good taste? it is asked. And the answer is given: only an excuse for the cowardice of shouting with the largest mob. Without knowing it, Shaw had discovered what men of insight, like Butler, had discovered of conventional good taste. He was interested in and dealt with artists. He made

use of the painter in real life, Cecil Lawson, as a model for a character he called Cyril Scott, not knowing that a musician of note of that name would arise. His insight into women of marked variety is impressive: it is not partial, but nevertheless he incidentally uses the word "heroinism." He has epigram, such as the observation that of the Irish, the culture is not equal to the brains, whereas of the English, the brains are not equal to the culture: he has humour, as when he writes of his hero that "a deep toned bark from within relieved him of all desire to intrude." He incidentally uses the phrase "witch of Atlas," which was to recur to him as the title for the play that was rechristened *Captain Brass-bound's Conversion*. One point on which Shaw had not emancipated himself and that was to cling to him in his literary apprenticeship was making characters "talk book."

In 1879 for a time he had a job with the Edison Telephone Co. as demonstrator in their showroom. Here he was brought into contact with American artificers. He was much interested in electricity and other physical sciences and pursued their study with ardour. He observed many visitors debating whether they ought to tip him, but all decided for the negative.

A friend whom he made in London, of importance in his life, was one called Lecky, a versatile man and an enthusiast. He was a musical scholar and became the author of the article on "temperament," i.e., systems of tuning keyed instruments, in the first edition

of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Through him Shaw's many-sided interests were further stimulated. We find Shaw naturally studying music in such phases as "temperament," we find him taking up shorthand and phonetics. From this time dates his interest in niceties of spelling, typography, etc. He wrote articles for magazines on subjects in which he was interested. Through Lecky he got to know the famous scholars Alexander Ellis and Henry Sweet, "that revolutionary don."

In 1879 London was hit by an economic depression such as it was not to experience again until 1931. There was widespread distress, which produced alarm. In the winter Lecky joined the debating society called the Zetetical Society and took Shaw. The Zetetics were emancipated. Women spoke. Each speaker was liable to cross-examination. The favourite authorities were Mill, Comte, Malthus, Ingersoll, Darwin, Spencer, Tyndall, George Eliot. In these circumstances Shaw made his first public speech. It was the time of the prosecution of Mrs. Besant. Socialism was regarded as an exploded fallacy. Yet Shaw defended the action of the State in taking Shelley's children from him and in taking Mrs. Besant's from her. As a speaker he was nervous and halting.

He got to know Sidney Webb, who evoked the tribute, "Sidney Webb was of more use to me than any other man I have ever met, and will be of more use to England than any other man of his time."

## 1880: "THE IRRATIONAL KNOT"

In 1880, when he was twenty-four, Shaw was writing his second novel. In writing his previous one he was concerned with the problem of marriage: no doubt he was concerned with it also as having a theoretical reference to himself. He was grappling with the question, What is *real* aristocracy? Suppose a real aristocrat: his way to marriage of the right kind might be blocked by the present organization of society. Suppose a real aristocrat married a social aristocrat. The real aristocrat, Shaw found, is seeking to raise the achievements of human beings. "I was profoundly unsatisfied with what I produced," he wrote afterwards, "and worked by mere instinct, like a beaver," turning out five pages a day.

The second novel he called *The Irrational Knot*. It sings Conolly, the man and his message. That message is the transition from the life of instinct to conscious life. The object of life is to heighten the quality of life. In reading the book one is conscious of strong vitality, of spiritual power, of psychical vigour. The book is not intellectualist merely. The fundamental thing in life, it says, is feeling. But not *any* feeling. Feeling ought to be tested by *what is rationally justified*. The first duty of man is the *maintenance* of the quality of life by work, physical and/or mental. The next duty is to *heighten* the quality of life by discovery or invention, physical and or mental, including, of course, art, music, etc.

But the question of value—what is good?—is thus raised. In order that this may be assessed, criticism is necessary. In order that this, in turn, may function properly, a fundamental requisite is sincerity. The utmost loyalty to the truth is required, and there must be freedom. The quest of truth is dangerous. When truth is found, how far ought it to be spoken? Shaw goes pretty far in the answer he gives by his practice, even in these earliest writings of his: he dares to say things that most people feel it uncomfortable to have said. But this is because the most dangerous evils are those that are not recognized as evils—it may be, are regarded as goods.

Shaw's ideal is *an artist in life*. He criticizes some of the most sacrosanct conventions in life, in art. He exposes the truth about them. He accepts the challenge, when criticizing them as bad, to put forth the good.

The story of *The Irrational Knot* is about a man of Irish extraction, who is essentially Shaw, but conceived as of maturer years than the hero of *Immaturity*. Conolly has a sister, a professional singer, a real artist; but the world has not given her the opportunity to do higher work, and she is a music-hall artist. (Needless to say, in spite of the fact that Shaw's sister was a professional singer, this character is not biographical.) Conolly is a practical scientist employed by a dilettante scientist peer. He thus becomes acquainted with a girl of good family who would fain be, but is not, a real artist in painting. The irrational

knot of their marriage is that Conolly does everything rationally, and his rationality drives her to the irrational, the unexpected, the adventurous—which turns out badly. (Here, no doubt, Shaw was working out the result of the marriage of a man like himself.) The pathos of the situation, for both, is made manifest. So is that of the marriage of Conolly's sister. She, feeling the need for something deeper than the music-hall could supply, married a social aristocrat. She finds herself hurt by convention, takes to drink, and dies miserably. *The Irrational Knot* was not the novel of the happy ending.

In style, although the book steers away from the conventional, sentimental novel of the time, it nevertheless is influenced by it, including still dialogue that "talks book."

Incidental to the main narrative is doctrine on various matters. For example, it is advocated that children should be allowed great freedom; the artist who is a pseudo-artist is exposed; and so on.

The book is an extraordinarily forward-looking one, and it anticipates many things in the later Shaw—the philandering motif, for example. Here is an anticipation of *Candida*: "When I was a romantic boy, any good woman could have made a saint of me. Let them fall in love with you as much as they please. Afterwards they will seek wives according to a higher standard than if they had never met you." The pursuing-woman motif is adumbrated in a reference to a novel written by a girl in the book:

"Brother George read it and was shocked because the heroine loves the villain and tells him so without waiting to be asked." Another anticipation of a later practice of his is a passage of speech spelt phonetically: "Shloy gow to him? Ow, oy sy! This is fawn. Awsk him to cam in eah to me." The following passages anticipate later Shavian dialogue:

"What is the use of straining after the amiable view of things, Marian, when a cynical view is most likely to be the true one?"

"There is no harm in giving people credit for being good."

"Yes, there is, when people are not good, which is most often the case."

"You cannot have the security of conventionality along with the self-respect of sincerity."

A passage which is illuminating on Shaw himself is this utterance of a character who suffers under a false reputation:

"I have outlived my sensitiveness to this injustice, and have even contracted a bad habit of pretending to act up to it occasionally before foolish people."

So it has been with some of Shaw's reputation for egotism, for being shocking, and so on.

There is a feature in Shaw's art which is of importance and is missed by large numbers of those who see his plays and read his works, and which is illustrated in this early work of his—namely, his sympathy with persons of types commonly disliked. This is connected with the principle of literary construction for which we may adopt the label, "surprise." It also

involves revelation of the sincere nature of a person from behind the mask conventionally worn. In *The Irrational Knot*, a woman busybody, suspected of an ulterior motive, is being dissected by Conolly when

the expression she habitually wore like a mask in society wavered and broke. Her lip trembled, her eyes filled with tears, she rose with a sniff that was half a sob. When she spoke, her voice was sincere for the first time and at the sound of it Conolly's steely, hard manner melted, and his inhuman self-possession vanished.

" You think," she said, " that I came here to make mischief. I did not. Marian is nothing to me, she does not even like me; but I don't want to see her ruin herself merely because she is too inexperienced to know when she is well off. I have had to fight my way in London; and I know what it is and what the world is. She is not fit to take charge of herself. Good-bye, Mr. Conolly: you are a great deal too young yourself to know the danger, for all your cleverness. You may tell her that I came here and gossiped against her, if you like. She will never speak to me again: but if it saves her, I don't care. Good-bye."

" My dear Mrs. Fairfax," he said with entire frankness, " I am now deeply and sincerely obliged to you."

At the end of the book Conolly quotes John Hay:

For always in thine eyes, O Liberty,  
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;  
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee.

This is the sentiment that we should expect. But Shaw has gone away from it, and Conolly goes on: "And she does slay us. Now I am for the fullest attainable life. That involves the least endurable liberty."

One of the most remarkable things about Shaw is his maturity from his earliest writings and the consistency of his conclusions from the beginning of his writings to the latest of them.

(*The Irrational Knot* was not published until 1885, i.e., five years after it was written, and then it was published under the benevolent auspices of Mrs. Besant in the journal she ran called *Our Corner*, from April of that year until February, 1887. It appeared in book form in 1905.)

In 1880, when he was twenty-four, Shaw joined the Dialectical Society, the senior society to the Zetetical—the Dialectical Society which is referred to in *You Never Can Tell*. He suffered agonies from nervousness, but kept on learning public speaking. He subsequently joined Stopford Brooke's debating society at Bedford Chapel and also spoke for the agnostics.

Lecky introduced him to an old Alsatian opera-singer called Deck. Deck was a disciple of Proudhon. According to Frank Harris, "From Deck, Shaw learned three things: 1. To bank up his hair in the manner familiar to all his caricaturists. . . . 2. How to pronounce French vowels instead of British diphthongs. 3. How to articulate and emphasize his consonants for public delivery. . . . Shaw never thereafter had any difficulty in making himself heard and understood in the largest halls."

Another aid to Shaw in cultivating nonchalance, according to Harris, was that in his youth he had seen

a play called *Cool as a Cucumber*. It was the story of a young man who had been sent on a world tour to cure him of bashfulness. He came back so brazen that he insulted everybody and actually won their hearts by his insolence. Shaw consciously tried to follow this technique.<sup>1</sup>

He wrote his next novel in

1881: "LOVE AMONG THE ARTISTS"

The title was a parody on "Love among the roses," a line then current. The story is a study of a musician, based on Beethoven, in England of the 1870's. It contrasts the genuine artist of originality and power with the conventional "artists." It pursues Shaw's criticism of life, including marriage, on which a negative decision is again reached. The hero rejects marriage in a manner that forecasts *Candida*—"Back to thy holy garret, O my soul!" Of family affection the hero says, "This family affection is half sense of property, and half sense of superiority." Of Nature he says, "Suppose I held up a lying, treacherous, cruel woman to the admiration of a painter and reviled him as unimaginative if he would not accept her blue eyes and silky hair and fine figure as a compensation for her corrupt heart." There is remarkable characterization.

A feature in this novel is the utterances on art:

There is an art which is inspired by a passion for beauty, but only in men who can never associate beauty with a lie.

<sup>1</sup> *Bernard Shaw*, p. 106.

"Earnestness of intention and faith in the higher mission of art are impotent to add an inch to my artistic capacity."

She had intended to try and fancy she was really Ophelia, and he really Hamlet; but when the time came to practise this primitive theory of acting, she did not dare to forget herself for a moment. She had to count her steps, and repeat her entrance four times before she succeeded in placing herself at the right moment in the exact spot towards which the tragedian looked.

She had learnt from Jack, much to her surprise, that she could not make her face express anger or scorn by merely feeling angry or scornful.

"Happy fellows like Mr. Adrian hit the mark at once, being neither too good for the Academy people nor too bad for the public."

Humanitarianism is expressed in *Love Among the Artists*. The hero, Jack, is naturally another projection of Shaw himself and, as Henderson, Shaw's biographer, has finely written: "Like Jack, Shaw is always tolerant of sincerity, always sympathetic with true effort, unrestrainedly enthusiastic over any vital outpouring of the human spirit; rebuking tyranny wherever he sees it, exposing falsehood when he hears it, eternally vigilant in exposing frauds and unmasking shams. And yet, with all his plain speaking, vehemence, and confidence, gentle-hearted, compassionate, and, in the presence of beauty, deeply humble."<sup>1</sup>

In each of his succeeding novels Shaw refers to characters in the preceding.

(Corrections in *Love Among the Artists* were made in 1882 and 1883. It was first published in *Our Corner*, from 1887, November, to 1888, December. In book form it was first published in England in 1914.)

The composition of *Love Among the Artists* was interrupted by an attack of smallpox. Shaw had been vaccinated in infancy. He became an anti-vaccinationist.

#### 1882 : "CASHEL BYRON'S PROFESSION"

In 1882, when Shaw was twenty-six, he wrote *Cashel Byron's Profession*. Here again he is concerned with the problem of marrying the real aristocrat. In this case approval is given to the marriage of a woman of high mental cultivation to a man of high physical cultivation who is a real artist, albeit his medium is boxing, but otherwise of little or no intellectual culture. Shaw's humanitarianism was pointing out what a high thing pugilism might be, compared with the cruelty of some professions and sports that are generally approved, and this view finds strong and effective exposition in the book. There is more story, however, and less propaganda than in its two immediate predecessors: the book is more human: it has humour rather than mordant wit. Hence (along with other reasons, such as the popularity of boxing) this novel was the most successful. The style of the speeches is still somewhat bookish. Shaw himself wrote of it afterwards: "The virtuous

and serious characters speak with a decorous stylishness and scrupulousness as if their speeches had been done by their governesses and schoolmasters. The distinction between the naturalness of the 'humble' characters and the artificiality of the society ones was still regarded as one of the social decencies by the seniors of literature."

The story is of a lonely boy of "good" family who ran away from school and eventually became a professional pugilist, who fell in love with the highly cultivated lady. Opportunity for social criticism and satire is obvious: the characterization and descriptions are excellent, as is the exposition of the essence of art as distinct from its excrescences.

Here is a notable passage:

"Executive power is what's wanted. . . . You want executive power to set an example. If you leave all that to the roughs, it's their example that will spread and not yours. . . . If that gentleman that laughed knew how to fight, and his neighbours knew how to fight too, he wouldn't need to fear police, nor soldiers, nor Russians, nor Prussians, nor any of the millions of men there may be let loose on him any day of the week, safe though he thinks himself."

This one throws light on Shaw himself:

"He couldn't have lasted out as he has done unless he was clever as well. It's the newness of the style that puzzles people; for, mind you, every man has to grow his own style out of himself. . . . Just wait a bit, and, take my word for it, they'll turn right round and say that his style isn't new at all, and that he stole it from someone they saw when they were ten years old."

This prophecy was, of course, duly fulfilled in the case of Shaw himself. His penetration to the simple truth that people hide from themselves is exemplified in this speech:—"The reason you won't learn is because you're ashamed of being seen going to school; and you calculate that if you only hold your tongue and look wise, you'll get through life without your ignorance being found out." In the same speech in which this occurs Shaw enunciated the Law of Reversed Effort—pointing out that the ease of mastery is its hall-mark.

Finally, here is a speech expressing Shaw's own experience and one that was to become important in the philosophy that he adopted: "It's not what a man would like to do that he must do in this world: it's what he *can* do." How often has this been exemplified even in literary history!—Shakespeare and Butler again!

*Cashel Byron's Profession* was rejected by Meredith and all the other publishers' readers.

(It was first published serially in *To-day*, the Socialist journal, from 1885, April, till 1886, March. The editor, Champion, stereotyped this print and issued it in book form at a shilling. It was reprinted and published in 1889 by Walter Scott. In the first decade of the present century it was published, with Shaw's other novels, by Constable.)

Shaw's descriptions of Society in his novels are the more remarkable in view of the fact that Lee's and the Lawsons' at homes were absolutely the only social

assemblies Shaw attended. When he had not a shilling for a theatre, he prowled solitary. He was never a night hawk, however.<sup>1</sup>

In 1882, on September 5, Shaw being twenty-six, he strayed into a meeting addressed by Henry George. He was inspired by George: in 1933 he stated that this speech "changed the whole current of my life."<sup>2</sup> Shaw bought a copy of *Progress and Poverty* (it had been published first in 1879). This led to his engaging in serious economic study. He came into touch with the economic views of Marx, who, having lived in London for thirty-four years obscure, had begun to get these views known a little from about the year 1881 through Hyndman. William Archer recorded his having seen the red-headed young Shaw at the British Museum studying together, apparently, Marx's *Capital* (in the French translation of Deville) and *Tristan and Isolde*. The reading of Marx was a decisive and sundering event in the life of Shaw: on his seventieth birthday he declared that it "made a man of him:" in 1933 in an "Aside" to Lillah McCarthy's *Myself and my Friends* he stated that his study of Marx made him more than a match for "Marxists," and revealed to him such a shattering criticism of Western civilization that, when Ibsen's works came to Britain, he was unshocked.

He joined the Land Reform Union and in it got to

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Address in New York, published as *The Political Madhouse*, p. 62.

know the Socialists Joynes, Olivier, and Champion. Another friend, and a very important one, he made was Salt. Both Joynes and Salt had been masters at Eton, but had proved too advanced for that institution. In contact with such men and Edward Carpenter Shaw developed his out-and-out Puritanism.

### 1883: "AN UNSOCIAL SOCIALIST"

In 1883 he tried to "produce a novel which should be a gigantic grapple with the whole social problem. . . . When I had finished two chapters of the enterprise—chapters of colossal length, but containing the merest preliminary matter—I broke down," not knowing more. He completed, however, *An Unsocial Socialist* in two "Books."

The main character expresses Shaw as he imagined he would act if he were free to act as seemed good to him. There is much Socialism, much propaganda. Marriage is regarded, in the case of such a man, as impossible.

A key to Shaw is that he has repeatedly met challenges to do something difficult. In this case it may be supposed that it would be a considerable challenge to him to imagine life in an English girls' boarding school—although data he may have obtained through his mother, who taught music. With this he occupies a good deal of the early part of the book. Again he meets the challenge of depicting various types of English society. And he meets the challenge of depicting the women that the girls grew into.

A remarkable feature is a page or two of political prophecy which has been largely fulfilled—due to real insight into what was happening economically when few apprehended that such insight was even possible.

*An Unsocial Socialist*, like Shaw's preceding novels, failed to find a publisher at the time.

In 1883 William Archer, being one of the reviewers for the old *Pall Mall Gazette*, handed a book over to Shaw and told the editor that he had been forced to do so by pressure of work. Shaw made good with an amusing review, and thenceforth had as much book reviewing as he cared to do for the *Pall Mall* at two guineas per thousand words.<sup>1</sup>

This year, when Shaw was twenty-seven, was largely occupied by him as a Socialist propagandist, chiefly as a speaker.

In 1883, on October 24, was founded the Fellowship of the New Life—by Thomas Davidson—a small society for a new religious foundation for life. In 1884, on January 4, one section of this society, seeking to follow the practical side of the new life, founded the Fabian Society. The name was taken, of course, from Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator, and the idea was not to form a political party but to adopt the policy of permeation.

#### 1884

In January, 1884, was started a Socialist monthly entitled *To-Day*. Shaw wrote for the biography of

<sup>1</sup> Harris, *Bernard Shaw*, p. 110.

E. Nesbit (Mrs. Hubert Bland) the following account of how *An Unsocial Socialist* came to be published in *To-Day*:

The paper was under the editorship of Belfort Bax and J. L. Joynes, and was not doing too well. I said to Joynes one day, "It's impossible to keep this going as it is. I'll tell you what you ought to do—run a serial in it. It doesn't matter a rap what it is; nobody will read it. Now I have a pile of old novels that no one will publish, and that are nearly in the waste-paper basket. Take one of these and use it as a serial." Joynes took the suggestion up, and I chose *The Unsocial Socialist*, because it was naturally the most suitable for that paper.

In the third number of *To-Day* appeared the first instalment of Shaw's novel. Shaw's note continues:

It was through this that I came into contact with William Morris, who actually read the instalments and liked them. It was the first idea I had that they were not unreadable.<sup>1</sup>

Shaw wrote for the same biography the following:

At that time I had read Marx and become a strong Socialist, but I was in doubt about throwing in my lot with the Social Democratic Federation—not because of snobbery, but because I wanted to work with men of my own mental training. The Fabian Society's tract, *Why are the Many Poor?* fell into my hands. The moment I saw the words "Fabian Society" on it, I realized that here was a good title which immediately suggested an educated body, so I found out the Society's address from the tract, and turned up at Pease's rooms for the next meeting.

Later Shaw brought Webb and Webb brought Olivier.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Nesbit, by D. L. Moore, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

On May 16 Shaw attended his first meeting of the Fabian Society. It was, be it remembered, only the second Socialist society to be formed in England. On September 5 he was elected a member. One tract had been published by the Society. On September 19 tract No. 2 was read, and it was by Shaw. It is very scarce but is reprinted in Mr. Pease's *History of the Fabian Society*. It is "A Manifesto" and it has for motto the lines by John Hay quoted in *The Irrational Knot*—which illustrates the fact that Shaw has used for propaganda purposes forms of belief that, in his own person, he would criticize. Two of the more interesting items are the following:

That men no longer need special political privileges to protect them from women: and that the sexes should henceforth enjoy equal political rights.

That the established government has no more right to call itself the state than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather.

Fabian tract No. 3 was also by Shaw and was addressed ironically "To Provident Landlords and Capitalists": it urged the proprietary classes to support "all undertakings having for their object the parcelling out of waste or inferior lands among the labouring class" in order to rob Socialism of its thunder.

Shaw at this time was studying Shakespeare with Furnivall. Another friend was Gonner.<sup>1</sup>

The early Fabians were Marxist and very confident

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards professor of economics at Liverpool and knighted.

of the truth of Marxism. In order to relate how they were converted from Marxism, it is necessary to tell a story that appears at first a digression, but which has perhaps interest of its own.

At this time the Rev. Philip Wicksteed, M.A., was a Unitarian minister. A scholar, he had set out to specialize in the Old Testament. He gave popular lectures in various towns on the Higher Criticism, then a new and feared thing. While on a visit to Glasgow on this work, he was asked by a Unitarian minister there, the Rev. Alexander Webster, if he had read *Progress and Poverty* and was urged to do so. As he read it on the way back to London in the train his brain (as he put it to me) was "set on fire": he felt that, if this book was true, there would be a revolution in England; if the book was not true, it must be answered. On his return to London he as soon as possible gave himself up to the study of economics. When he came to evaluate Marx, he found him vulnerable.

The Fabians challenged him to write a criticism of Marx for *To-Day*. He accepted the challenge, and in *To-Day* for October, 1884, appeared "*Das Kapital: a Criticism.*"

The Fabians waited for one of their number to demolish this article, but no demolition was forthcoming. Shaw was told that he must reply. On addressing himself to the task, he was converted, and his conversion permeated the Fabians. It seems to the present writer, in view of the influence the Fabians

were to have on politics, that the importance of this is very great.

The "Economic Circle," to which Shaw was presently introduced, was founded by some students at Manchester College, London, among them E. I. Fripp, but the meetings were conducted by Wicksteed. They began in 1884. Presently a Mr. Beeton began to attend and the meetings were transferred to his house. The circle began to be known among economists. H. S. Foxwell, Professor of Economics at University College, F. Y. Edgeworth, Professor of Economics at King's College, and Webb frequently attended and took part. Wicksteed's rejoinder article in *To-Day* led to Shaw coming to the group. There is on record a report of a speech by Shaw which reveals him as he was at this time: He said he had to choose between a bit of fire and a bit of food before going to bed. The curves of supply and demand had much less to do with a man's control of the market than the curves of his profile. He himself had earned only £100 in the previous twelve months, whereas the host, judged from the resolute curve of his chin, would be making £10,000 a year.

Graham Wallas, Marshall, and Cunningham attended the meetings. The two leaders of the discussions were Wicksteed and Shaw. Part of Shaw's doctrine was a national bank which should employ the national credit in loans at low interest. One of his utterances was: "If you eat your cake slowly enough, it will last for ever."

At the end of 1884 or the beginning of 1885 a group of the most scholarly Fabians, formed for the study of Marx and Proudhon, constituted itself into a class for the systematic study of history (the "Hampstead Historic") in which each student took his turn at being professor. They met in Hampstead, first in private houses, and finally at the Hampstead Public Library.

For several years Shaw attended the Hampstead Historic once a fortnight, and spent a night in each alternate week at the above private circle of economists (Beeton's Economic Circle) which later blossomed into the British Economic Association—where the social question was left out. At this period of his life he attended all sorts of meetings. He applied himself with great industry to his education.

## 1885

In 1885, on January 2, Shaw was elected to the Executive of the Fabian Society.<sup>1</sup>

The constant and unceremonious criticism of men who were at points much abler and better informed than himself developed in Shaw two distinctive traits: self-possession and impassiveness.

At this time, at a conference, Shaw faced his first big audience and made his first big speech; and he was patted on the back for it.

His reply to Wicksteed's article appeared in the January number of *To-Day*. In the February number

<sup>1</sup> He was re-elected every year until his voluntary retirement in 1911.

was published the first instalment of Ibsen's *Ghosts* in English. In the April number was Wicksteed's rejoinder to Shaw (Shaw had stipulated with the editor that Wicksteed must be allowed a rejoinder), but it was quite brief. In the April number also was the first instalment of *Cashel Byron's Profession*. Champion, the editor, was so delighted with this novel that he had the type as set up stereotyped and the novel published in book form at a shilling. Archer reviewed it prominently; Henley wanted to have it dramatized; the *Saturday Review* declared it the novel of the age: but doubtless this was partly due to the popularity of pugilism. It is worth noting that even this reception did not make Shaw a success.

In 1885, when Shaw was twenty-nine, Archer, having adapted the scenario of a French play, Augier's *La Ceinture Dorée*, asked Shaw to write the dialogue for the new play, which Shaw proceeded to do. Archer has told us that it was to be called *Rhinegold*. The opening scene was to be in a hotel on the Rhine. The hero was ultimately to throw the tainted treasure, metaphorically, into the Rhine.

Shaw was hereafter to be seen writing page after page in shorthand at three words a second. In six weeks he had written half the first act. He submitted Act I to Archer, who rejected it. Shaw nevertheless wrote a second act and read it to Archer, but presently found the latter was asleep. This convinced Shaw of failure as a playwright and he put his manuscript away in a drawer. (Later, he discovered that it was

a habit of Archer's to present the appearance of being asleep and that in fact he had not been put to sleep on this occasion.)

Morris and Shaw at this period often addressed Socialist meetings together and were fortunate if they had an audience of twenty. The influence of Morris on Shaw was very great and Shaw has always looked up to him as to a master. Especially is this true, of course, in respect of things artistic.

In this year, 1885, Shaw's father died. Incidentally, this cut off the weekly allowance of £1, so that it was fortunate that Shaw had begun to earn money, albeit about £100 a year.

An interesting glimpse of Shaw in this year is afforded by a letter of E. Nesbit (Mrs. Hubert Bland). Speaking of members of the Fabian Society, she says that "a certain G. B. Shaw is the most interesting":

G.B.S. has a fund of dry Irish humour that is simply irresistible. He is a very clever writer and speaker—Is the grossest flatterer (of men, women and children impartially) I ever met, is horribly untrustworthy as he repeats everything he hears, and does not always stick to the truth, and is *very plain* . . . and yet is one of the most fascinating men I ever met. Everyone rather affects to despise him "Oh, it's only Shaw." That sort of thing, you know, but everyone admires him all the same. Miss H—— pretends to hate him, but my own impression is that she is over head and ears in love with him.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation of Mrs. Bland's charge of

<sup>1</sup>E. Nesbit, by D. L. Moore, pp. 72-3.

untrustworthiness, etc., is bound up with the fact, contrary to the idea of Shaw as a mere firebrand, that, throughout his life, one of his main achievements has been in keeping people together. It was so in the Fabian Society, which cohered while Socialist societies disintegrated. In the biography of Mrs. Bland it is recorded:

Mr. Shaw, whose polemics belong only to his public character, and whose private inclinations tend always towards keeping the peace, would often tactfully intervene between Bland and those with whom he would otherwise have been in a state of friction.<sup>1</sup>

Now one of Shaw's favourite methods, when mutual friends were disloyal, was to tell the one in the presence of the other what the other had said about him, with exaggeration, and *vice versa*: laughter solved the knot.

He rendered an important service to the cause of Socialism in this year by editing Laurence Gronlund's popular exposition of Socialism which appeared in the United States in 1884, entitled *The Co-operative Commonwealth, Its Outlines: An Exposition of Modern Socialism*. It was elaborately overhauled by Shaw, differing considerably in Shaw's treatment in diction and occasionally in spirit. Shaw's editing, as he himself claims, "amounts to a re-writing of the book." In the English edition, this work was the second volume in the "International Library of Social Science."

<sup>1</sup>E. Nesbit, by D. L. Moore, p. 98.

## 1886

During 1886 the chief excitement was a series of fierce debates between the Fabians and that section of the Socialist League known as Anti-State Communist, chiefly represented by William Morris. It is significant that, only two years after its founding, the Fabian Society debated the question of the advisability of the Socialists organizing themselves as a political party "for the purpose of transferring into the hands of the whole working community full control over the soil and the means of production, as well as the production and distribution of wealth." Shaw took an active part in this very spirited debate, which was decided in the affirmative. The Fabian Parliamentary League, organized as a result of this debate, forthwith produced a manifesto which contained the germ of Fabian policy as later known.<sup>1</sup>

In this year Shaw was one of the audience at Wallas's paper to the Fabians on "Personal Duty under the present System." This paper emphasized personal responsibility for evils in the present economic system, which was to become a leading theme with Shaw.

Archer was dramatic critic to *The World*, then a leading fashionable weekly. The picture critic of *The World* died, and Archer was asked to succeed him, but, knowing nothing of pictures himself, and although he suspected that Shaw, in spite of

<sup>1</sup> For the last two paragraphs, Henderson, 1932, pp. 175, 176.

his talk, did not know much more, he pushed Shaw into the job, Shaw receiving fourpence a line.<sup>1</sup>

Shaw stood forth, as Henderson truly says, as the champion of all forms of art—pictorial, plastic, fictive, dramatic—which discover beauty, truth, and above all, *encouragement*, in the sheer facts of life without idealistic falsification and romantic sublimation.

His debt to Archer Shaw repaid quickly, in that about this time he was responsible for Hubert Bland's getting his first regular journalistic work. Shaw had been asked to undertake a weekly article for a certain periodical and it was a practice of his never to reject an offer of this sort without trying to get one of his friends accepted as substitute. At his suggestion, therefore, Hubert Bland was given the job and, making a success of it, achieved by degrees a very wide repute.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Hubert Bland fell in love with Shaw openly (her husband had no right to complain in the light of his own conduct). She addressed several fervent poems to him in one of which she spoke of his "maddening white face." This passion "elicited from its object nothing but a heartlessness which he knew how to make amusing, and it was soon transmuted into a gay and untroubled friendship."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harris, *Bernard Shaw*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> E. Nesbit, by D. L. Moore, pp. 78-80. Another of Shaw's beneficiaries in this sort was William Clarke.

<sup>3</sup> E. Nesbit, by D. L. Moore, p. 80.

## SHAW'S ART CRITICISM

One of the objects against which Shaw directed his art criticism was the confusion between art and the satisfaction of sex.

Take the young lady painted by Ingres as "La Source," for example. Imagine having to make conversation with her for a couple of hours. . . . My art criticism of "La Source" is that it is the very worst picture that ever won celebrity by its infamously drawn nakedness.

Shaw saw that prudishness, on the other hand, is based on evasion of sex that is due to a guilty sex-consciousness. *A propos* Millais's "Knight Errant" he wrote :

He is almost sawing her fingers off in his efforts to cut her bonds without coming on her side of the tree. One is at a loss which to admire most: the delicacy of the knight or that of the painter in whose treatment there is not the faintest taint of voluptuousness—even in colour.

And we find Shaw writing of

decorated moral systems contrasting roseate and rapturous vice with lilyed and languorous virtue, making "Love" face both ways as the universal softener and redeemer

and we find Shaw making the following point :

a nightingale's love is no higher than a cat's, except that the nightingale is the better musician.

In his art criticism he dealt with Ruskin. He maintained that Ruskin's clue was the religious one; yet he could not discover so glaring an error as Bernardo Luini's employment of the same model for the Virgin and the Magdalen.

Anon we find him writing of Michelangelo, one of his "heroes"; he points out that there are always geniuses in his works, not ordinary people, and he emphasizes Michelangelo's accuracy. We recall that Shaw later testified that Michelangelo counted for a good deal in the making of his mind, and that in his plays we have a series of studies of the man of genius and that a feature of Shaw's work is its accuracy.

He wrote about pictures for the best part of a season until a naïve proposal was made to him that he should write favourable notices of certain artist friends of the editor with liberty to do the same for artist friends of his own. Of this Shaw has said :

This proposal was made in perfect good faith and all innocence, it never having occurred to those responsible that art criticism was a serious pursuit or that any question of morals or conduct could possibly arise over it. Of course I resigned with some vigour, though without any ill humour; but some, I know, were quite sincerely, pathetically hurt by my eccentric, unfriendly and disobliging conduct : in fact, when the acting editor died shortly after, I was considered little better than a murderer.<sup>1</sup>

The suggestion was withdrawn. Few people apparently can take seriously the view that the moral responsibility of a critic is on a par with that of a judge. During his career as a critic Shaw was repeatedly urged by colleagues to call attention to some abuse which they themselves were not sufficiently strongly situated to mention. He resigned very desirable posts in order to maintain this moral

<sup>1</sup>Henderson, 1932, p. 266.

position. Interpolations in his articles, in the case of the post we are now dealing with, met with his resignation.

#### 1887 : SHAW REVIEWS BUTLER

In 1887, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* for May 31, appeared an unsigned review of Butler's *Luck or Cunning?* which was written by Shaw. The copy in the Butler collection at St. John's College, Cambridge, was given to Mr. Festing Jones by Mr. Dan Rider, who told him that Shaw's original manuscript, which he wrote off his own bat, was very much more laudatory and much longer, but the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* cut it down and took out some of the praise for fear of offending the Darwins and their friends. The article is entitled "Darwin Denounced." It militates against idolatry of men (with the implication that idolatry of Darwin was in being), states the issue between Darwin and Butler, and concludes :

Let it suffice to acknowledge his [Butler's] skilful terseness of expression, his frank disdain of affected suavity or imperturbability, his apparently but not really paradoxical humour, his racy epigrams and the geniality of his protest against "a purely automatic conception of the universe as of something that will work if a penny is dropped into the box." Ordinarily, a man who should write a book to complain that previous works of his had been overlooked, slighted or borrowed from without acknowledgment, would be coughed down, or even, when he went on to denounce Darwin as mean and Goethe as a writer of "dull diseased trash" (*Wilhelm Meister*), hooted down. The fact that Mr. Butler has

succeeded in doing this, and yet securing, not only a hearing, but considerable attention and interest, is a conclusive proof of the exceptional ability with which he has stated his case.

It seems to the present writer a proof of Shaw's high quality that he was, contemporaneously with Butler's writing, converted to the significance of Butler's scientific philosophy.

In the "Charing Cross Parliament" the "Socialist Government" formed by H. H. Champion which took office on July 15 of this year was surely one of the most remarkable "Governments" ever formed in a debating society:—Champion was Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury; Annie Besant, Home Secretary; Shaw, President of the Local Government Board; Sidney Webb, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Hubert Bland, Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Graham Wallas, President of the Board of Trade; Sydney Olivier, Colonial Secretary.

The year

1888

was notable in the history of journalism in that T. P. O'Connor founded *The Star*, a great innovation in the way of cheap and popular journalism (not in the bad sense of the words). His lieutenant was H. W. Massingham. Massingham pushed Shaw on to O'Connor, with a rapturous account of Shaw as a brilliant young journalist with advanced ideas, to be assistant leader-writer at £2 10s. a week. In the event, O'Connor was appalled at Shaw's Fabian

articles. Matters came to a head when John Morley complained to O'Connor about a paragraph that had been written by Shaw. Massingham then suggested that Shaw should write on music a weekly column for two guineas, and O'Connor jumped at the compromise. Shaw wrote under the pseudonym, "Corno di Bassetto" (the name of the basset horn which went out of use in Mozart's time).

Shaw's appointments as critic rendered him economically independent of reviewing. He continued to review, but his neglect of books that were not worth reviewing, and such incidents as his delay of a brief review of a manual of philosophy by Sidgwick for a whole year while Shaw was reading up the subject from Thales to George Henry Lewes, brought remonstrances from the publishers, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* tacitly ceased to send books to Shaw.<sup>1</sup>

Shaw was invited to read a paper before the Economics Section of the British Association. He wrote it, *The Transition to Social Democracy*, at William Morris's house on the Thames. This was the paper afterwards published as Shaw's second in *Fabian Essays*. Characteristic of Shaw's high morality is the conclusion, in which he says that if we are glad of the inevitable slowness of the transition to Socialism,

if we feel relieved that the change is to be slow enough to avert personal risk to ourselves; if we feel anything less than acute disappointment and bitter humiliation at the discovery that there is yet between us and the promised land a wilderness in which many must perish

<sup>1</sup>Henderson, 1932, p. 259.

miserably of want and despair: then I submit to you that our institutions have corrupted us to the most dastardly degree of selfishness.

The paper was read at the meeting in September, 1888. In the discussion, someone suggested that Shaw was insufficiently versed in the subject. This evoked loud laughter from those who knew how thorough Shaw's knowledge was.

In *To-Day* for November, under the heading "Fabiana" appeared the following:

The systematic course on the basis and prospects of Socialism instituted by the Fabian Society began on September 21, at Willis's Rooms, with Mr. Sidney Webb's paper on the "Historical Aspect." The Rev. Stewart Headlam was in the chair and the room was crowded, many of the audience being well-known Socialist lecturers. In the absence of Mr. Webb in the United States, his paper was read by Mr. Hubert Bland. . . . A short discussion followed, in which Mr. Wicksteed criticized Mr. Webb's metaphor of the Social Organism as being inexact. Mr. Adolph Smith and Mr. Bland defended the lecturer, and Mr. G. B. Shaw thought that Mr. Wicksteed's point had not been fairly met and proceeded to meet it with a little essay in empirical ethics, which was more amusing than sound. Mr. John Burns delivered a characteristic speech. . . .

A still larger audience assembled on October 5, to hear Mr. G. B. Shaw's lecture on the "Economic Aspect," and during the greater part of the evening the room was uncomfortably crowded. . . . Mr. Shaw adopts the Jevonian theory of value, against which he entered the lists with Mr. Wicksteed some years ago and got badly beaten. . . . So far Mr. Shaw had kept within the lines

of orthodox economics : then he became original—and fallacious. . . . The paper was a valuable one from every point of view and proved that Mr. Shaw is possessed of an amount of rhetorical fire with which he has not hitherto been credited.

In the December number of *To-Day* we read that in the discussion on Mr. Olivier's paper:

Mr. Shaw tried to say that there was no system of ethics peculiar to Socialism, and only succeeded in making the audience think that he meant that Socialism and ethics had nothing to say to each other—and, naturally, the audience laughed much thereat.

Of William Clarke's paper it is written :

It was a most admirable example of arrangement and exposition, and it was lighted up by flashes of humour which showed that Mr. Shaw has a dangerous rival in what has hitherto been his undisputed province. . . . When the lecturer sat down, after having been on his legs for an hour and a half, there was general agreement among the audience that as this had been the longest, so it had been the best of the series.

In 1888 Shaw began another novel. The fragment, which bears no title, has never been published.<sup>1</sup>

Ibsen came to be known prominently in Shaw's circle during this year. Marx's daughter, Eleanor Marx-Aveling, with whom Shaw was often associated in Socialist work, published in this year a volume of translations, *Pillars of Society and Other Plays*, including *An Enemy of the People*. Wicksteed was a pioneer in

<sup>1</sup> Forty years later, Shaw's secretary unearthed it, which, Shaw wrote, "were not my own handwriting against me, I could swear I never wrote, saw, conceived, nor heard of in my life."

the study of Ibsen. Public opinion on Ibsen was such that neither Wicksteed's Unitarian chapel nor the University of London would allow him to lecture on the subject, and Wicksteed, in 1888, gave his lectures in Chelsea Town Hall. Shaw has written, "at the first performance of *A Doll's House* in England, on a first floor in a Bloomsbury lodging house, Karl Marx's daughter played Nora Helmar ; and I impersonated Krogstad at her request with a very vague notion of what it was all about."<sup>1</sup>

A second print of Swann, Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co.'s edition of *An Unsocial Socialist* was issued in 1888 containing as an appendix a "Letter to the Author from Mr. Sidney Trefusis," which concludes with the following remarkable passage:

In conclusion, allow me to express my regret that you can find no better employment for your talent than the writing of novels. The first literary result of the foundation of our industrial system upon the profits of piracy and slave-trading was Shakespeare. It is our misfortune that the sordid misery and hopeless horror of his view of man's destiny is still so appropriate to English society that we even to-day regard him as not for an age, but for all time. But the poetry of despair will not outlive despair itself. Your nineteenth-century novelists are only the tail of Shakespeare. Don't tie yourself to it : it is fast wriggling itself into oblivion.

That the sales of *An Unsocial Socialist* were not large is indicated by the fact that Shaw's royalties on it for 1889 amounted to 2s. 10d.

<sup>1</sup> In *Myself and My Friends*, by Lillah McCarthy, p. 3.

**1889: "FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM"**

In the 1889 January number of *To-Day* it is recorded that in the discussion on Mrs. Besant's paper, Mr. Shaw "was by no means certain that the world was not specially constructed with a view to affording an environment favourable to scarlet-fever and small-pox germs." Here Shaw was pointing out that there is truth in the doctrine of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest and that there is, if anything, less evidence that the world was constructed for man than that it was constructed for some very humble forms of evolution: man must not presume: he must struggle for survival.

In the March number we read:

We are glad to learn that the Executive Committee of the Fabian Society have made arrangements with Mr. Fisher Unwin for the early publication, in volume form, of the recent course of seven lectures on the "Basis and Prospects of Socialism." The book will be edited by Mr. G. B. Shaw, who, in addition to his lecture on the "Economic Basis," will contribute a general introduction.

In *Fabian Essays on Socialism* the first essay, by Shaw, entitled "The Basis of Socialism: Economic," contains the following:

But your slaves are beyond caring for your cries: they breed like rabbits; and their poverty breeds filth, ugliness, dishonesty, disease, obscenity, drunkenness, and murder. In the midst of the riches which their labour piles up for you, their misery rises up too and stifles you. You withdraw in disgust to the other end

of the town from them ; you appoint special carriages on your railways and special seats in your churches and theatres for them ; you set your life apart from theirs by every class barrier you can devise ; and yet they swarm about you still : your face gets stamped with your habitual loathing and suspicion of them : your ears get so filled with the language of the vilest of them that you break into it when you lose your self-control.

When we remember that Shaw not only heard the lectures delivered but edited them and know that he was a very careful editor, we see in these essays things that entered into his mind not less than those that he embodied in his own. For example, in the paper by Sidney Webb :

young children dragging trucks all day in the foul atmosphere of the underground galleries ; infants bound to the loom for fifteen hours in the heated air of the cotton mill and kept awake only by the overseer's lash ; hours of labour for all, young and old, limited only by the utmost capabilities of physical endurance ; complete absence of the sanitary provisions necessary for a rapidly growing population : these and other nameless iniquities will be found recorded as the results of freedom of contract and complete *laissez faire* in the impartial pages of successive blue-book reports.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is sometimes asserted nowadays that the current descriptions of factory life under the regime of freedom of contract are much exaggerated. This is not the case. The horrors revealed in the reports of the official enquiries even exceed those commonly quoted.

It was doubtless such accounts that led Shaw later to describe the nineteenth century as “the blackest page in history.”

The tale is carried on in William Clarke's paper :

children were often maimed and sometimes killed with impunity. Drunkenness was naturally general. Short lives and brutal ones were the rule. The men, it was said, "died off like rotten sheep ; and each generation is commonly extinct soon after fifty." Such was a large part of industrial England under the unrestricted rule of the capitalist. There can be no doubt that far greater misery prevailed than in the Southern States during the era of slavery.

Clarke dealt in his paper not only with history : his prophecies are remarkable :

Perhaps the greatest move is yet to come : the move on the vast market of China. For this England, America, France, and Germany will compete.... America will probably, by a judicious reduction of her tariff, compete with England all over the Pacific, and will send her goods from the Atlantic ports through the Panama or Nicaraguan Canal of the near future . . . the end of the century will perhaps see the great Siberian Pacific in actual existence.

Olivier dealt with, and stressed, the emotional factor in Socialism, and surely in this he was right :

" Subjective volition, passion it is," says Hegel, " that sets men in activity : men will not interest themselves for anything unless they find their individuality gratified by its attainment." . . . The individual in society does that which is pleasant to his friends, and abstains from doing that which is unpleasant, not because he likes to be thought a good fellow, or expects benefits in return, but simply because it gives him immediate pleasure so to act. He is sensitive to that which hurts them, not because he fears that his own defences are weakened by their injury, but because they

have actually become part of himself by the extension of his consciousness over them. This social instinct, this disposition to benevolent sympathy, appears almost as inextinguishable as the personal desire of life: in innumerable instances it has proved far stronger. . . it is followed because it is seen to be reasonable, because it is the path indicated by common sense towards the satisfaction of the individual passion for the extension of freedom and love.

We have seen that Shaw at an early age discovered this moral passion. It became cardinal in his teaching, not only that there are good passions as well as bad, but that the good are at least as strong as the bad.

*Fabian Essays in Socialism* was published, with the imprint of the Fabian Society as publishers, as a nice tall green octavo with cover design and frontispiece by Walter Crane, significantly romantic, and with good paper and print. The promoters expected to sell comparatively few copies, but the book sold rapidly, and edition after edition was called for.

On June 7, 1889, was performed *A Doll's House*, with Janet Achurch and Charles Charrington as leading members of the cast, and it made a deep impression on Shaw.

In a letter to Hubert Bland, on November 18, 1889, Shaw wrote:

If such a man is to attain consciousness of himself as a vessel of the *Zeitgeist* or will or whatever it may be,

he must pay the price of turning his back on the loaves and fishes, the duties, the ready-made logic, the systems and the creeds. He must do what he likes instead of doing what, on secondhand principles, he ought. And of course, there is a devil of a fight to acquire the power to do what you like and to get fed and clothed for doing it. You and I, according to the most secondhand principle, should be prosperous men of business, I for the sake of my poor dear mother, who, in her old age, has to live on a second floor and eke out the domestic purse by teaching schoolgirls to sing, you for the sake of your clever and interesting wife and pretty children. In bygone days, when I had nothing to shew for myself except rejected MSS. and was reproached over and over again, more or less directly, with being an idle, lazy, heartless, selfish scoundrel, and I myself was too young to have my eyes quite open, I would absolutely go now and then to look after some opening which I had no real intention of taking, but which I still thought it necessary to find some external reason for not taking. No doubt you have done the same thing in one form or another. Now I have no faintest hesitation left. The secondhand system on which I "ought" to have been a stockbroker has absolutely no validity for me. My own line of progress is from writing stories, reviews, and articles, more and more towards writing fully and exhaustively what I like. And of course my mother, the victim of my selfishness, is a hearty, independent and jolly person, instead of a miserable old woman dragged at the chariot wheels of her miserable son, who had dutifully sacrificed himself for her comfort. Imagine Mrs. Bland as the wife of a horrible city snob with a huge villa, a carriage, and several thousand a year, which is exactly what, on moral principles, it was your duty to have made her.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *E. Nesbit*, by D. L. Moore, pp. 100-101.

1890

Shaw wrote a sequel to the *Doll's House* (Sir Walter Besant had published one), showing Nora as an outcast for violating the social code, the tragedies which overtook her children, and the smug conformity and shameful cowardice of Krogstad. This appeared in February, 1890, in *Time*.

In 1890, when *The World* suddenly lost its music critic, Archer recommended Shaw for the vacancy as "at once the most competent and the most brilliant writer on music then living in England." Shaw left off writing in *The Star* under the pseudonym, *Corno di Bassotto*, and now wrote a weekly musical article in *The World* over the initials, "G.B.S.," for which he received five pounds. He adopted the attitude of the man who knows, and from time to time expressed himself in this manner:

Some day I will write a supplement to Schumann's "Advice to Young Musicians." The title will be "Advice to Old Musicians"; and the first precept will run "Don't be in a hurry to contradict G.B.S., as he never commits himself on a musical subject until he knows at least six times as much about it as you do."

## 1891: "THE QUINTESSENCE OF IBSENISM"

In 1891 a young Dutchman, J. T. Grein, hired a cheap public hall in Tottenham Court Road, drew to the full on his meagre resources, and announced a performance of Ibsen's *Ghosts* to inaugurate the new theatre, to be called The Independent Theatre,

modelled on the lines of Antoine's *Théâtre Libre*. Considerable financial support and gratuitous professional help enabled him to give the performance of *Ghosts* at the Royalty Theatre, Soho, on March 13. Grein's programme was the production of good plays that would not commend themselves to the ordinary commercial management. In particular, Ibsen was played. Shaw heard a good deal of Ibsen: for example, Archer translated *Peer Gynt* *viva voce*.

The Fabian Society was short of lectures and Shaw was called upon, with others. On July 18 he gave the substance of what was later the book, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. There was a crowded audience and the effect of the lecture is described as having been overwhelming: the discussion seemed as out of place as a debate after an oratorio.

The *Quintessence of Ibsenism* may be said to deal with evolution in human life—the theme which had come to have a central interest in Shaw's life. Life, according to the view that Shaw had adopted, is an art, and all are artists, good or bad: the artist *par excellence* is the true pioneer. People are at different stages of development. A thousand people might roughly be said to consist of 700 Philistines, 299 idealists and one other. Leaving the Philistines alone, Shaw's attack is on the nineteenth-century pseudo-idealists, romanticists, who covered up reality. The one man in the thousand is he who deals with reality. On the subject of marriage, for example, the 299 would pretend that there was nothing wrong. The

one would recognize that free will is necessary to love ; the desire to give is not satisfactory unless there is power to withhold. Self-respect is necessary : a man cannot believe in another unless he can believe in himself. The liar's punishment consists not in that he is not believed but in that he cannot believe. A man's conviction of the worth of another must be filled with the conviction of his own worth. Conversely, he must believe in the freedom of others in order to be self-respecting. One must be able to stand out for honourable conditions, and, if these are not forthcoming, to go without. Freedom is necessary to marriage. The young wife finds that her husband is neglecting her for his business, that his interests, his whole life, except that one part of it to which only a cynic ever referred before her marriage, lies away from home : and that her business is to sit there and mope until she is wanted. The "ideal" wife is one who does everything the particular man likes, and nothing else. When the accident of genius enables a woman to become an unconventional woman without losing the sort of life she values, she, as a rule, rebels.

The one person in the thousand says, " This thing is a failure for many of us. It is insufferable that two human beings, having entered into relations which only warm affection can render tolerable, should be forced to maintain them if such affections do not exist between them."

But to repudiate a conventional obligation is to incur trouble. That an apparently guilty act is

innocent is more fiercely resented than that an apparently innocent act is guilty. This is because of guilty conscience behind public opinion: the act is made guilty by the wrong spirit with which it is regarded. The freedom claimed menaces base opportunity and is also thought to occasion more trouble. The opponent not only declares that the grapes he cannot get are sour: he also insists that the sloes he can get are sweet. The person who has risen *above* the temptation to sin against the spirit is thought to be lower because he is higher.

This is Shaw's exposition of the quintessence of Ibsenism, and the issue of it, according to him, is this: When a man is at last brought face to face with himself by a brave individualism, he finds himself face to face, not with an individual, but with a species, and knows that, to save himself he must save the race. He cannot live without life in the community: and if that life is unhappy and squalid, nothing that he can do to paint and paper and upholster and shut off his little corner of it can really rescue him from it. The quintessence of Ibsenism is that "conduct must justify itself by its effect upon life."<sup>1</sup>

Feminism is to be noted in these early works of Shaw and very express in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. It is one manifestation of generosity, in the best sense of the word, which is characteristic of him.

<sup>1</sup> In the first edition Shaw had "happiness" where "life" stands here. Henderson in his biography of 1911 commented adversely on the use of the word "happiness." Shaw altered "happiness" to "life" in the edition of 1912.

*The Quintessence of Ibsenism* was published in 1891. A German lady who read it told Shaw that she knew where he had got it all. He asked where. She said, from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. This was the first time that Shaw had heard Nietzsche's name. He instantly understood the title and thereafter took an interest in Nietzsche.<sup>1</sup>

On October 16, 1891, Shaw read a paper to the Fabian Society on "The Impossibilities of Anarchism." (This was, in July, 1893, published as Fabian tract 45.) It contains the following passages :

It is useless to think of man as a fallen angel. If the fallacies of absolute morality are to be admitted in the discussion at all, he must be considered rather as an obstinate and selfish devil, who is being slowly forced by the iron tyranny of Nature to recognize that in disregarding his neighbour's happiness, he is taking the surest way to sacrifice his own.

The popular method of always estimating an evil suffered by a hundred persons as a hundred times as great as the same evil suffered by one is absurd. A hundred starving men are not a hundred times as hungry as one starving man. But they are a hundred times as strong as a political force. Though the evil may not be cumulative, the power to resist it is.

It is possible by decentralization to limit the power of the majority of the whole nation to questions upon which a divided policy is impracticable. For example, it is not only possible, but democratically expedient, to federate the municipalities of England in such a manner that

<sup>1</sup> Letter quoted in the catalogue of Henderson's Shaviana, p. 33.

Leicester might make vaccination penal whilst every other town in the island made it compulsory. Even at present, vaccination is not in fact compulsory in Leicester, though it is so in law. Theoretically, Leicester has been reduced to a cipher by the rest of England. Practically, Leicester counts twelve to the dozen as much as ever in purely local affairs.

## 1892

In 1892, on February 6, Shaw read a paper to the Fabian Society on "The Fabian Society: What it has done and how it has done it." (It was published in August of the same year as Fabian tract 41.) In this there is an interesting autobiographical passage telling how he developed as a speaker:

I do not hesitate to say that all our best lecturers have two or three old lectures at the back of every single point in their best new speeches ; and this means that they have spent a certain number of years plodding away at footling little meetings and dull discussions, doggedly placing these before all private engagements, however tempting. A man's Socialistic acquisitiveness must be keen enough to make him actually prefer spending two or three nights a week in speaking and debating, or in picking up social information in the most dingy and scrappy way, to going to the theatre or dancing or drinking, or even sweetheating, if he is to become a really competent propagandist.

In 1892, "the Liberals"—in the words of Shaw—"put all their Home Rule tracts in the fire, and fought on a programme of English Social Reform, known as the Newcastle Programme, drawn up by my Fabian

friend and colleague, Mr. Sidney Webb, and ingeniously foisted on the Liberals by myself and other Fabians disguised as artless Gladstonian members of little local caucuses which called themselves Liberal and Radical Associations.”<sup>1</sup>

In June of this year Shaw published “Fabian Election Manifesto, 1892.” He pleads for “a genuine Working Class party, supported by Working Class subscriptions and completely independent of Liberal and Conservative aid. The fact that no such party exists is disgraceful to the Working Classes. A subscription of only three halfpence a year from every male worker in the kingdom would bring in a parliamentary fund of £50,000 a year.” He reproaches the workers that they have done nothing for themselves. “The most immediately important measure is a Reform Bill providing for Payment of All Members and Election Expenses out of public Funds, Second Ballot, and Shorter Parliaments.” Shaw also wrote the leaflet, “Vote, Vote, Vote,” begging the electors at least to vote.

Shaw, like many another, had been fascinated by Ellen Terry as an actress. In June, 1892, Ellen Terry wrote to Yates asking for an opinion on a girl singer in whom she was interested. Yates asked Shaw to answer it and thus began the correspondence between them which lasted until the death of Ellen Terry.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the Home Rule Edition of *John Bull's Other Island*, 1912.

## SHAW'S FIRST PLAY: "WIDOWERS' HOUSES"

In this year Shaw resurrected the torso of the play he had written in quasi-collaboration with Archer, and completed it. He had come to see that modern economic society was so ramified that social evils cannot be attributed to what are really symptoms. In the problem of the slums, the slum dwellers are symptoms of social disease, but so also are the slum landlord and his rent collector: they may be morally no more responsible for the condition of society that produces them than most of the rest of us are: we are no less responsible than they. The social disease is not to be cured by denouncing them and harrying them: all of us (including of course the slum landlords, rent collectors and slum dwellers) are responsible for the condition of society that makes slums possible.

Shaw was also, as we have seen in his novels, in reaction against the romanticism of the nineteenth century, itself a reaction against the profligacy of the preceding age. The romantic play that dealt with "tainted money" would show the hero renouncing it, supported by his bride, both accepting love in a cottage. Shaw, as an observer of life, could not honestly represent this as normal, nor could he accept the stage-and-novel versions of hero and heroine. In real life the young man is not invariably heroic nor the young woman invariably amiable. Something of compassion is due to the slum landlord, his rent-collector, the hero and heroine, even if, from another point of view, they are a pretty set of hypocrites and

scoundrels. We are fortunate if we can say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

The original of Blanche was Florence Farr, a well-known actress of the time, whom Shaw knew personally. Sartorius was suggested by an Irish stationer, to whom Shaw never spoke: his imposing manner suggested the character. Cockane, according to Shaw, was modelled on a man of whom he had only heard, but it is interesting that Lord Olivier has recorded his opinion that Cockane was modelled on himself (Lord Olivier). Shaw has admitted that an author may be modelling a character on one person *consciously*, while subconsciously he is being influenced by other models.

The dialogue and characterization are remarkably alive: humour and satire intermingled are prevalent: accurate knowledge is unobtrusively obtrusive: the handling of the stage business is excellent. The antecedent lives of the characters have been thought out, even to heredity. The play, indeed, reveals a marvel of observation and thought. Shaw has grasped the fundamental fact of play-writing technique —that the interest of the audience must be seized and then held by surprise, and the desire to see what is going to happen. Blanche was certainly a surprise for a "heroine": she is the pursuing female and a realist in economic and other matters: "her father's daughter only one generation removed from the wash-tub": a passionate creature in a sense other than that expected in the romantic heroine. The

author has thought out the life of the characters in the intervals represented by the entr'actes.

An example of the depth of Shaw's ability as a playwright may be pointed out in Act III. Lickcheese with his real knowledge of human nature sees that Trench is ready to be bowled over by the appeal of sex and contrives an excuse to take all the men but Trench into the study, knowing that Blanche will come to Trench. It is a point typical of subtlety which is frequent in the works of Shaw and which escapes all but a very few.

Shaw gave the play the "mock-scriptural" title, *Widowers' Houses*. He offered it to Grein, who produced it at the Royalty Theatre.

The part of Blanche was not only modelled on Florence Farr but was played by her.<sup>1</sup> The parlour-maid was acted by the lady who afterwards became Lady Martin Harvey.

Shaw, the producer and Grein from the first had been in despair over the casting of Lickcheese. One day, while a rehearsal was going on, a man came in who looked the part. The producer, who knew him and may have suggested his coming, immediately pressed him into reading the part. He read it so well that he retained it and proved the hit of the performance. It was James Welch.

<sup>1</sup> She and Shaw had met at William Morris's house in the days of the Ibsen controversy. It was he who directed her attention to the part of Rebecca West, in which she made a great impression. She and Shaw were intimate friends at the time of the production of *Widowers' Houses*.

At the second and last performance (the Independent Theatre could afford only two) the applause was unanimous. *The Era* of December 24, 1892, wrote:

Hardly any recent play has provoked so much newspaper and other controversy as Mr. Shaw's *Widowers' Houses*. At least two of the daily papers, on the day after its production, devoted leading articles to its consideration, besides special criticisms of almost unprecedented length. We should be afraid to say how many journals gave two long columns to it. Then all last week a controversy on its merits and demerits raged in a morning paper; and it was held up as an example of the kind of play the Lord Chamberlain did *not* object to by Mrs. Aveling in her lecture to the Playgoers; and finally it was one of the subjects of an interesting lecture delivered last Sunday night to the Socialists of Hammersmith. The fact, however, becomes less surprising when we find that the lecturer was Mr. Bernard Shaw.

### 1893

The Independent Labour Party was founded in January, 1893, seven months after Shaw published the manifesto in which he advocated the formation of a working-class party.

The Liberals repudiated the Newcastle Programme, whereupon Shaw and Webb wrote a slashing attack on them, published in the *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1893, entitled "To Your Tents, O Israel!" It later appeared in greatly expanded form as Fabian tract No. 49, laying down the lines for the formation of an independent labour party in parliament.

“ THE PHILANDERER ”

In this year, when the discussion about Ibsenism, “the New Woman,” and the like, was at its height, Shaw wrote for the Independent Theatre the topical comedy which he called *The Philanderer*. He felt that the truth about love-making ought to be told. Shaw has innate gallantry and women have pursued him. He was bound to express the superior man’s, the artist’s, self-revelation, revealing his own experiences with women. As he put it later, in *Man and Superman*, speaking of the artist,

To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to arouse his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from his cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it. He persuades women that they may do this for their own purpose, while he really means them to do it for his.

Shaw told Henderson that the first act is an artistic version of a scene in his own life. “Charteris,” he added, “is as much myself as Berowne, Mercutio, and Benedick are Shakespeare. They are all cads, if you like, just as Charteris has been called a cad ; but does that really dispose of them?” Julia Craven was modelled on a young widow, a pupil of his mother. Cuthbertson was suggested by Shaw’s impression of Clement Scott, and Craven is said to have been suggested similarly by Hyndman. The new woman and

the womanly woman, the old man and the new, rational man are depicted. The incongruity of the new ideas with those held by the other people is made the subject of satire. It is characteristic of Shaw and a very strong point in him that views which he in his personal life holds with are not exempt from being laughed at. Satire on doctors is introduced, coupled with vivisection. An excellent specimen of Shaw's humour is the depiction of a doctor who believes he has discovered a new disease, on the strength of this sentences a patient to death, and then discovers that another doctor has disproved the existence of the disease. The patient who is told that his sentence of death has existed on a misapprehension says:

Now upon my soul, Paramore, I'm vexed at this. I don't wish to be unfriendly ; but I'm extremely vexed, really. Why, confound it, do you realize what you have done? You've cut off my meat and drink for a year—made me an object of public scorn—a miserable vegetarian and a teetotaller. . . . You don't half see how serious it is to make a man believe that he has only another year to live ; you really don't, Paramore : I can't help saying it. I've made my will, which was altogether unnecessary ; and I've been reconciled to a lot of people I'd quarrelled with—people I can't stand under ordinary circumstances. Then I've let the girls get round me at home to an extent I should never have done if I'd had my life before me. I've done a lot of serious thinking and reading and extra church going. And now it turns out simple waste of time.

The humiliation of a woman being bargained for by two men is exhibited and words are used to describe

this situation which became more famous when Shaw used them again in *Candida*.

Writing of this play to Mansfield, the American actor, Shaw said:

The man who plays Craven must be a handsome, genial old boy of whom the public are thoroughly fond. Julia must be full of passion and beauty. Paramore must be rather rigid and well conducted—a model conventional leading man. Cuthbertson is a caricature of Clement Scott, whose double you must have somewhere in the New York press. Charteris must be played by you.<sup>1</sup>

#### “MRS. WARREN’S PROFESSION”

The germ idea of this play, which Shaw wrote during the latter half of 1893, was in Maupassant’s *Yvette* and was suggested by Janet Achurch to Shaw, who resolved to work out the truth about the mother in the story. Mrs. Sidney Webb, disgusted by the sex-obsessed women in *The Philanderer*, had asked Shaw to write a play about a real, modern, unromantic, hardworking woman: Shaw responded with the daughter in the play. Shaw was also dealing with another social problem: in *Widowers’ Houses* it was the slums; now it was to be prostitution. *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* is a mordantly serious play. Shaw found that in this problem too in modern society, if you want to save yourself, you must save the world: you are implicated economically in this also. The play is the very antithesis of the romantic plot. A young man and a young woman, after having fallen in love with

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mansfield, 1895, February 27, Henderson, 1932, p. 357.

each other, discover that they are half-brother and half-sister to each other and that her mother is a brothel-keeper. Among the people implicated in the business is a clergyman, the father of the young man. The brothel-keeper is not a stage villainess : she has a case and it is put. The heroine is an "advanced" young woman, and posterity has proved that she really was an advance type. There can be no doubt of the gravity of the play : it is a mordant protest against moral wrong. It was, in spite of this, banned from the stage for years.

#### 1894

In *The Fortnightly Review* for February, 1894, appeared an article by Shaw on "The Religion of the Pianoforte," which contains the following :

In this century the world has produced two men—Shelley and Wagner—in whom intense poetic feeling was the permanent state of their consciousness, and who were certainly not restrained by any religious, conventional or prudential considerations from indulging themselves to the utmost of their opportunities. Far from being gluttons, drunken, cruel, or debauched, they were apostles of vegetarianism and water-drinking ; had an utter horror of violence and "sport" ; and were notable champions of the independence of women.

#### "ARMS AND THE MAN"

In 1894 Miss Horniman, hiding her love of the theatre from a Puritan family behind the management of Florence Farr, financed a season of plays of the new

order at the Avenue Theatre. A play having failed, Florence Farr asked Shaw to allow *Widowers' Houses* to be put on, but Shaw wrote a new play at express speed.

At this time Graham Wallas was an assistant master in a London suburban school, where one of his colleagues was an ex-officer of the German army. Wallas retailed to Shaw this ex-officer's accounts of the unromantic aspects and character of modern soldiering.<sup>1</sup>

Shaw attempted to write a "pleasant" play but, nevertheless, to teach the lesson of the realities of war contrasted with the romantic ideas about war that still reigned and similarly of the real selves of people as contrasted with the conventional expectations of them to which they play up. The character Sergius was modelled on Cunninghamame Graham, and Bluntschli on Sidney Webb. The part of Raïna was written specially for Alma Murray. An interesting point about the composition of this play is that we have Shaw's testimony that it was "finished before I decided where to set the scene." "I wanted a war as a background. Now I am absolutely ignorant of history and geography.... Sidney Webb told me of the Servo-Bulgarian War, which was the very thing.... So I looked up Bulgaria and Servia in an atlas." "Stepniak studiously encouraged me to think well of my work and went into the Bulgarian business for me. It needed only a word here and there to put matters

<sup>1</sup> Olivier in Henderson, 1932, p. 212.

straight." (Nevertheless, Brandes said of the play that it was thoroughly Balkan and spoke of "the waiting-maid and the man-servant with their half-Asiatic mingling of forwardness and servility.") Shaw named the play *Arms and the Man*.

In it he exposes "the untrue ideas suggested to our imaginations by our half-satisfied passions." He was again reacting against what was conventionally expected of the young lady of the time as against what she was in her real self, and the heroine, when Bluntschli penetrates to her real self, collapses and says, "How did you find me out?" The dramatic principle of surprise is again practised in this play and is carried to the fantastic. Humour and laughter bubble up all the time. The *romance* of war is dissipated, but the serious needs of war are dealt with.

In the production, Saranoff was played by Bernard Gould, i.e., Bernard Partridge; Alma Murray played Raïna, the part written for her; Florence Farr was Louka; and James Welch, Major Petkoff. In this first form of *Arms and the Man* was a character called Major Plechanoff, a Russian officer in the Bulgarian service, and this part was played by A. E. W. Mason, afterwards the well-known novelist. A cover design for the programme was drawn by Aubrey Beardsley.

In 1894, on April 21, *Arms and the Man* was produced. Shaw wrote afterwards, "*Arms and the Man* had the wildest first night I ever saw." When he responded to the calls for "Author!" a single boo was heard among the applause, whereupon Shaw said, "I quite

agree with you, my friend, but what are we two against so many?" But it would appear that the enthusiastic first audience exhausted the play-going public for *Arms and the Man* at the time. Shaw, when he wrote to Ellen Terry in 1899 that *Arms and the Man* had the wildest first night he ever saw, went on, "but it never drew £30 afterwards." Mr. Fuller-Maitland has written, "Shaw asked me if I would go and see his first essay as a dramatist [this, of course, was not historically correct], and accordingly my wife and I attended one of the early performances of *Arms and the Man* and found the Avenue Theatre only very sparsely filled. I need not say how surprised we were to realize that here was a landmark in the history of British drama."<sup>1</sup>

The play incurred the displeasure of King Edward, on the ground of its representation of army life.

It had a run of eleven weeks—till July 7. The loss was about £4,000 (the receipts were £1,777) and was borne by Miss Horniman, behind the scenes. Shaw did not know this till years later. In spite of financial failure, the play was an undoubted success and was widely known, as the following lines by Henry Salt testify :

Since G.B.S. from P.V.M.  
For title took that ancient gem,  
"Arms and the Man," how many quote it!  
How few give thought to him who wrote it!  
And now methinks it savours less  
Of P.V.M. than G.B.S.

<sup>1</sup> *A Door-keeper of Music*, p. 206.

*Arms and the Man* was put on in the United States by Mansfield. Shaw was now getting a precarious income from royalties, but he stuck to his journalistic scale of expenditure, knowing that if he became dependent on the theatre, its commerce would enslave him.

An example of how productions of Shaw plays have been killed by what cannot be called by any other name than swinishness occurred during a provincial tour (in which John Drinkwater's father played Bluntschli) at Oxford. The following account was written by John Corbin, then an undergraduate and later a dramatic critic:

The first act, with its intense suspense, had a fighting chance with a house full of undergraduates. But the cause was prejudiced by the fact that the undergraduates were themselves in about the same state of repletion as the house. When Bluntschli crawled in at the window, the voice of a townee in the gallery cried out to Raïna, "Get under the bed." That decided the fate of the play. In the second act a red-headed sprinter of international prowess, a capital fellow, of the name of Jordan, got up in the middle of the third row, faced the audience, and pointing his thumb over his shoulder at the actress who played Louka, said, "Do you know, I rather like that girl." It was the coup de grâce. I went again on the second night. . . . The house was empty.<sup>1</sup>

#### "SOCIALISM AND SUPERIOR BRAINS."

At this time the late Mr. W. H. Mallock was attacking Socialism on the ground that the present

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 366. *Heartbreak House* was ruined on its first production by similar conduct, only this time it was on the part of dramatic critics.

distribution of wealth corresponded roughly to ability. Frank Harris asked Shaw if he could reply to Mallock and Shaw wrote an article, "Socialism and Superior Brains," which appeared in *The Fortnightly Review* for April, 1894. Shaw's argument is that the demand for services is very far from being in proportion to their worth and that the true basis for society is the ethical one, service and not self. In order to appreciate such writings of Shaw, one must remember the received view that salaries depend on what you can get and are not to be ethicized by altruistic motives.

#### "CANDIDA"

Shaw's thought turned to the problem of prophecy. Take the human type that, with due allowance for human imperfection, would be accepted as, humanly speaking, ideal, and ask yourself what will supersede it. Shaw chose a devoted Socialist clergyman, modelled on Stopford Brooke with touches of Fleming Williams, and his wife, the ideal wife and mother, modelled on Ellen Terry but written for Janet Achurch as the next best available. The hero of the play is a young poet: although naïve, he has great potential intelligence, insight, and capacity for absorbing experience at lightning speed. The plot is the same as that of *Othello*, the awakening of doubt in a husband's mind as to the fidelity of his wife: but whereas in *Othello* it is on the physical plane, in *Candida* it is entirely platonic. The young

poet, Marchbanks, has fallen in love with Candida, attributing to her poetic hungers that are left unsatisfied by the empty husks of her husband's rhetoric: his chivalry is appealed to: he must rescue her from this starvation. Marchbanks' power raises in the husband's mind doubt of himself. Instead of the *Othello* "solution" of death, the denouement is explanation and understanding: Marchbanks comes to see that Morell, the husband, is not a mere selfish humbug, but that he loves his wife unselfishly; he also comes to see that Candida does not have the poetic hungers that he attributed to her. Candida reveals that, while her husband has been all the time protecting her, she has been protecting him. Both Morell and Candida are content with their work and domestic happiness: they do not realize the hunger in the young man of genius for experience of greater things: he has assimilated their experience and now must go forward to greater. This is the explanation of the speeches at the end of the play which led Shaw to give it the sub-title, "a Mystery."

From the technical point of view of play construction this is a remarkable specimen. It exhibits great economy. The unities of time, place and action are observed. Instead of the plot being created by a villain, it is created by the hero. For denouement there is explanation and understanding instead of misunderstanding. And yet there is real and powerful action. It is spiritual action. People suffer and are changed by it. It is really poetic drama. The

author has lost himself in interpreting *Candida*, Morell, and other characters. The tense element is relieved by comedy, including a whole comic part, the father of *Candida*. Minor characters are revelations of life. And yet there are only half a dozen characters and one scene and no change of costume and a domestic setting from contemporary life. It is a valid opinion that has been held by a number of students of Shaw that as a unified, balanced work of art, this is Shaw's best play and one of the best plays that have been written.

(Shaw promised the part of *Candida* to be acted by Janet Achurch, whose pre-emption kept the play from the regular stage for several years. The copyright performance was given on March 30, 1895, at South Shields, with John Drinkwater's father as Marchbanks. *Candida* did not receive regular performance until, in the provinces, it was produced in 1897 by the company of the Independent Theatre. In the spring of 1898 it was given by the Independent Theatre company in a few cities in the provinces, notably Manchester, with *Candida* played by Janet Achurch.)

1895

## “THE MAN OF DESTINY”

In 1895 Shaw had the idea of Napoleon as an ideal part for Richard Mansfield. In an idle moment he began to write a play with this idea, and developed a part for Ellen Terry: it eventuated as *The Man of*

*Destiny.* Shaw wrote to Mansfield in 1897: "I was much hurt by your contemptuous refusal of *A Man of Destiny*, not because I think it one of my masterpieces, but because Napoleon is nobody else but Richard Mansfield himself. I studied the character from you and then read up Napoleon and found I had got him exactly right." During the period in which he was writing *The Man of Destiny* he corresponded with Ellen Terry frequently; he saw her numberless times on the stage but had not actually met her when he wrote the play. "The heroine," he wrote, "is simply a delineation of Ellen Terry—imperfect, it is true, for who can describe the indescribable!" The play is a study—and revelation—of the man of genius. The lady is, of course, an emissary of Josephine to intercept the latter's incriminating letter.

(*The Man of Destiny* was not produced at all until 1897, when it was given a performance at the Grand Theatre, Croydon.)

In September, 1895, Frank Harris bought the *Saturday Review*. All the staff (including George Saintsbury) resigned. Although the journal was Conservative in politics, Harris was out for talent irrespective of politics. He tried to lure Archer from *The World*, but in vain. He felt that Shaw had written himself out as a musical critic and that he would do well as dramatic critic and as such he

engaged him to write a weekly article for £6, twice the paper's usual price, with the promise of a free hand, no contributions to be cut without consultation. Harris has written: "Most newspaper men had heard of G.B.S.: his initials stuck in the mind: they were the same as, or very like, those of a famous pipe."

#### "THE SANITY OF ART"

In 1893 Max Nordau had published a book in German, *Entartung*, which was soon translated for England and America as *Degeneration*. The thesis was that genius was degeneracy or due to degeneracy. Benjamin Tucker, editor of an American paper called *Liberty*, wrote to Shaw saying that he might ascertain the highest price ever paid, even to Gladstone, for a magazine article and that Shaw would be paid that price for a review of *Degeneration*. The response to this commission was "A Degenerate's View of Nordau," later published as a brochure with the title, *The Sanity of Art*. In it Shaw makes the claim that honesty, self-respect, hatred of cruelty and injustice, the desire for soundness, health, and efficiency are master passions, and that the ordinarily recognized passions are regarded as the only ones falsely.

If a young woman, in a mood of strong reaction against the preaching of duty and self-sacrifice and the rest of it, were to tell me she was determined not to murder her own instincts and throw away her life in obedience to a mouthful of empty phrases, I should say to her: "By all means do as you propose. Try how wicked you can be: it is precisely the same experiment as trying how

good you can be. At worst you will only find out the sort of person you really are. At best you will find that your passions, if you really and honestly let them all loose impartially, will discipline you with a severity which your conventional friends, abandoning themselves to the mechanical routine of fashion, could not stand for a day." As a matter of fact, we have seen over and over again this comedy of the "emancipated" young enthusiast flinging duty and religion, conventional and parental authority to the winds, only to find herself, for the first time in her life, plunged into duties, responsibilities, and sacrifices from which she is often glad to retreat, after a few years' wearing down of her enthusiasm, into the comparatively loose life of an ordinary, respectable woman of fashion.

According to Shaw, if we look life straight in the face, we see in it the satisfaction of a passion in us of which we can give no rational account whatever. The indispensable qualification for a wicked life is not freedom but wickedness. The essential soundness of life comes out in art.

The claim of art to our respect must stand or fall with the validity of its pretensions to cultivate and refine our senses and faculties until seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting become highly conscious and critical acts with us, protesting vehemently against ugliness, noise, discordant speech, frowsy clothing, and re-breathed air, and taking keen interest and pleasure in beauty, in music and in nature, besides making us insist, as necessary for comfort and decency, on clean, wholesome, handsome fabrics to wear, and utensils of fine material and elegant workmanship to handle. Further, art should refine our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our

self-knowledge, self-control, precision of action, and considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity.

Shaw did not accept payment for the article. When Morris read *The Sanity of Art*, he at once threw off all reserve in talking to Shaw about modern art, and treated him henceforth as a man who knew enough to understand anything that might be said to him on the subject.

In this same year, 1895, Shaw wrote

“THE PERFECT WAGNERITE”

It offers the interpretation of Wagner's *Ring* that it is based on symbolizing the modern economic problem.

The most inevitable dramatic conception . . . of the nineteenth century is that of a perfectly naïve hero upsetting religion, law, and order in all directions, and establishing in their place the unfettered action of Humanity doing exactly what it likes, and producing order instead of confusion thereby because it likes to do what is good for the race. This conception, already incipient in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, was certain at last to reach some great artist and be embodied by him in a masterpiece.

If man has progressed, his good will must have gained on his evil will. But there is no such thing as man: there are two kinds of men: (1) the exceptional ones who progress and who pass on their gains to (2) the mass, which is reactionary, which has to be humbugged to be governed. The tendency of the populace is

dysgenic: "the majority of men at present in Europe have no business to be alive": and it is necessary to breed superior men. The sex instinct ought not to play more than a holiday, recreative part in our lives: it creates illusions on a grand scale, which are detrimental: a boy imagines a treasure of tenderness and noble wisdom in the beauty of a woman.

Some of Shaw's incidental musical criticism in this book is surprising—for example, "The reputation of Brahms rests on his absolute music alone: such works as his German Requiem endear themselves to us as being musically great fun; but to take them quite seriously is to make them oppressively dull."

### 1896

In 1896, in *The Savoy*, No. 1, in January, alongside contributions from Aubrey Beardsley, J. Pennell, W. Rothenstein, Max Beerbohm, Ernest Dowson, appeared one from Shaw, "On Going to Church." He outs upon the sterility, the absence of art in the church of his boyhood: "Yes, all the vulgarity, savagery, and bad blood which has marred my literary work was certainly laid upon me in that house of Satan! . . . I hasten to claim honourable exemption, as atheist and socialist from any such complicity." But "if I had been turned loose in a real church, and allowed to wander and stare about, or hear noble music there. . ." Shaw argues for the church as the home of the arts. "Show me where, within the cathedral, I may find the way to the cathedral in me."

In a letter to Ellen Terry on April 6, 1896, Shaw wrote :

He will not produce it for your sake: no man ever does anything for a woman's sake: from our birth to our death we are women's babies, always wanting something from them, never giving them anything except something to keep *for us*. After all, why should he be fond of people? People are always talking of love and affection and the like—just as they talk of religion—as if they were the commonest things in the world; but the Frenchman was nearer the truth when he said that a great passion was as rare as a man of genius. Has he ever loved you for the millionth fragment of a moment? if so, for that be all his sins forgiven unto him. I do not know whether women ever love. I rather doubt it: they pity a man, *mother* him, delight in making him love them; but I always suspect that their tenderness is deepened by their remorse for being unable to love him. Man's one gift is that at his best he *can* love—not constantly, nor often, nor for long—but for a moment—a few minutes perhaps out of years. It is because I have had a glimpse or two that I am such a hopelessly impious person; for when God offers me heaven as the reward of piety, I simply reply, "I know. I've been there. You can do nothing further for me, thank you."

You boast that you are a fool (it is at bottom, oh, such a tremendous boast: do you know that in Wagner's last drama, Parsifal, the redeemer is "der rein Thor," "the pure fool"?) but you have the wisdom of the heart, which makes it possible to say deep things to you. You say I'd be sick of you in a week; but this is another boast: it implies that you could entertain me for a whole week. Good heavens! with what? With art? with politics? with philosophy? or with any other

department of culture? I've written more about them all (for my living) than you ever thought about them. On that plane I would exhaust you before you began, and could bore you dead with my own views in two hours. But one does not get tired of adoring the Virgin Mother. Bless me! you will say, the man is a Roman Catholic. Not at all; the man is the author of *Candida*; and *Candida*, between you and me, is the Virgin Mother and nobody else. And my present difficulty is that I want to reincarnate her—to write another *Candida* play for you. Only, it won't come. *Candida* came easily enough; but after her came that atrocious *Man of Destiny*, a mere stage brutality, and my present play brings life and art together and strikes showers of sparks from them as if they were a knife and a grindstone. Heaven knows how many plays I shall have to write before I earn one that belongs of divine right to you. Some day, when you have two hours to spare, you must let me read *Candida* to you. You will find me a disagreeably cruel-looking, middle-aged Irishman with a red beard; but that cannot be helped. By the way, you once spoke to me, although, as you were evidently woolgathering at the time, you won't remember the circumstance. It was at one of the performances at the new opera house which is now the Palace Music Hall. You were in the stalls; so was I; and it happened that we were almost the last persons to leave and were kept standing together for a moment waiting for the doorway into the corridor to clear. I was highly conscious of your illustrious presence and identity, but of course took care not to appear conscious. You seemed very much in earnest and even affected about something; and my theory is that you were in imagination impersonating some unfortunate young village girl of lowly station—Hetty in *Adam Bede*

perhaps—and that you suddenly took it into your head that I was the squire, or perhaps the parson. At all events you most unexpectedly raised your eyes to mine for a moment and said, with the deepest respect, "Good evening, sir." I nearly sat down on the floor in confusion ; but by good luck I managed not to wake you out of your dream. What I did was to instinctively fall into your drama (whatever it was) by saying "Good evening" so exactly in the manner of the squire acknowledging a salutation from the gamekeeper's daughter (a most respectable, promising, well conducted young woman) that you passed unsuspectingly on up the avenue, with the squirrels and rabbits scampering away as you approached ; and I watched you until you turned into the path leading to the dairy and vanished. I suppose you don't happen to remember, in the course of your transmigrations, meeting a squire or a parson with a red beard and a nasty expression about the corners of his mouth?

In this year, 1896, the Fabian Society was joined by a Miss Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend. In August of this year at a house party at Saxmundham Shaw and she found themselves much drawn to each other by similarity of interests.

#### "YOU NEVER CAN TELL"

written for the most part in the summer of 1895, was completed by the early autumn of 1896. It was an attempt to comply with many requests for a play on the lines of a fashionable comedy. Shaw provided fun, fashionable dresses, a little music, expensive life in a hotel with eating and drinking, and a comic

waiter. Mrs. Clandon is said to have been founded on Mrs. Besant, but surely there are traces in her of Shaw's mother. The waiter is said to have been modelled on Lord (then Mr.) Haldane. Although full of riotous fun, the play has deeply serious moments in it. As Shaw wrote, "When a comedy is performed, it is nothing to me that the spectators laugh; any fool can make an audience laugh. I want to see how many of them, laughing or grave, are in the melting mood." Shaw, himself believing in "advanced" women and libertarian upbringing of children, is sufficient humorist to show and laugh at some of the results, while still believing in them mainly. He also sympathizes, though he does not agree, with the old school, and sees how libertarians fail to sympathize with what is righteous in the old school. The advanced young man and woman are seized by the sex instinct, "as if Nature, after allowing us to belong to ourselves and do what we judged right and reasonable for all these years, were suddenly lifting her great hand to take us—her two little children—by the scruffs of our little necks, and use us, in spite of ourselves, for her purposes in her own way."

Surprise is used again in this play to the point of the fantastic, but the characterization is marvellously good, the humour is overwhelming, and life abounds.

*You Never Can Tell* proved impossible for the commercial theatre. (When later the repertory movement evolved its audience, this play was in the front rank of its popularity.)

In 1896, on August 28, Shaw wrote to Ellen Terry:

We may all admire one another, enjoy one another, love one another, enter into all sorts of charming relations with one another ; but all this is the mere luxury of human intercourse: behind it all, if it is to be really worth anything, there must be a certain deep and sacred respect for one another that we are free neither to give nor to withhold. It stands as an inexorable condition that we must not violate. It does not vary according to brains or beauty or artistic talent or rank or age or education ; and the difference between the wise heart and the fool is nothing but the difference between the person who feels it and acknowledges it and the person who doesn't. It is the primal republican stuff out of which all true society is made. (Here the lecturer took a glass of water and moistened his tonsils amid applause.) . . . I have had a shock down here. In the evenings they make me read plays to them ; and the other night I had to fall back on my Opus 2, a comedy called *The Philanderer*, now some years old. It turned out to be a combination of mechanical farce with realistic filth which quite disgusted me ; and I felt if my plays get stale at that rate, I cannot afford to postpone their production longer than I can help. . . . Shakespeare is as dead *dramatically* as a doornail. Your only chance of learning him without intolerable effort is to learn him by ear ; for his music is unfailing. . . . I dread success. . . . To have succeeded is to have finished one's business on earth. . . . I like a state of continual *becoming*. . . . I am a magnificently successful man myself, and so are my knot of friends—the Fabian old gang—but nobody knows it except we ourselves, and even we haven't time to attend to it. We have never stopped to pick up Atalanta's apples. . . . This time we

have been joined by an Irish millionairess who has had cleverness and character enough to decline the station of life—"great catch for somebody"—to which it pleased God to call her, and whom we have incorporated into our Fabian family with great success. I am going to refresh my heart by falling in love with her. I love falling in love—but, mind, only with her, not with the million; so someone else must marry her if she can stand him after me.

The lady here referred to was Miss Payne-Townshend. Shaw wrote a series of remarkable letters to Ellen Terry at this time on the part of Imogen, helping her to a performance of which she was afraid. They reveal profound study and insight. Then he encourages her not to be nervous: "guard against everything you can foresee; and then—take your chance." Shakespeare is a thing of shreds and patches. What she has to do is to

cover his foolishnesses and barrenesses, and to make the most of his little scattered glimpses of divinity. If you cannot believe in the greatness of your own age and time and inheritance, you will fall into the most horrible confusion of mind and contrariety of spirit, like a noble little child looking up to foolish, mean, selfish parents.

Oh, if people only would be modest enough to believe in themselves! . . . At first you try to make a few points and don't know how to make them. Then you *do* know how to make them and you think of a few more. When they miss fire, you are greatly put out. But finally the points all integrate into one continuous point, which is the whole part itself . . . the prodigious power of work that built it all up.

I saw Duse's great opening performance of Magda at Drury Lane. Everything came off like mad. I went to see it again, but this time all the great passages escaped her, slipped through her wretched fingers ; and yet it was a great performance. She played for all she was worth at the moment ; and it was more than enough for anyone who had not seen the other performance. Well, if you play Imogen to-morrow for all *you* are worth, under the circumstances, you can't fall below a good weekday performance, even if you are not in the vein for a regular Sunday one. Why be greedy? What would the golden moments be worth if they came always? There is always a great charm nowadays in you. I remember once feeling inclined to throw things at your head. Compared with a former performance of yours, you no longer walked in the fear of the Lord, which is the begining of wisdom. But all that seems gone now: you suffer and conquer in your work again. The agony, the dread, is the price of success. Would you cheapen it if you could?

You are not quite as proud as you should be of the fact that you are a fully self-possessed woman and therefore not really the slave of love. You would not delight in it so if it were not entirely subject to your will, if the abandonment were real abandonment, instead of voluntary, artistic, *willed* (and therefore revocable) rapture.

The ideal woman is a man, though women lie low and let that secret keep itself.

On my honour *Arms and the Man* was a serious play —a play to cry over if you could only have helped laughing.

I have a morbid horror of any ill treatment of children ; but I believe that love and the more touching sorts of happiness are wasted on them: they are really not

capable of them. Nobody is until they have earned them. In my own case I am afraid that though I was not ill treated—my parents being quite incapable of any sort of inhumanity—the fact that nobody cared for me particularly gave me a frightful self-sufficiency, or rather a power of starving on imaginary feasts, that may have delayed my development a good deal, and leaves me to this day a treacherous brute in matters of pure affection. Tell Edy that the two things that worthless people sacrifice everything for are happiness and freedom, and that their punishment is that they get both, only to find that they have no capacity for the happiness and no use for the freedom. You are not in the least free: you are tied, neck, wrists, and ankles to your profession and your domestic arrangements, and your happiness has been picked up in casual scraps on your way to your work. Edy on the contrary is quite free and has nothing to do but be happy. Yet who would choose her life instead of yours? Tell her to go and seek activity, struggle, bonds, responsibilities, terrors—in a word, life.

Well, shall I marry my Irish millionairess? She, like Edy, believes in freedom, and not in marriage; but I think I could prevail on her; and then I should have ever so many hundreds a month for nothing. Would you ever in your secret soul forgive me, even though I am really fond of her and she of me? No, you wouldn't.

I shared (and deepened) my mother's poverty—that is, lived virtually at her expense—for long enough. I began my literary career by writing five big novels and a host of articles which nobody would publish. My earnings for nine years were exactly fifteen shillings.

When Shaw returned to London, he began to spend his disengaged evenings with Miss Payne-Townshend at her flat, 10 Adelphi Terrace.

## “THE DEVIL’S DISCIPLE”

The actor William Terriss was the leading exponent of melodrama and he seriously proposed to Shaw that the latter should write a melodrama with all the stock situations in it. Here was another challenge to Shaw to do a most unlikely thing. Could he write a melodrama and “get away with it” artistically? In 1896 he began to try, having Terriss in his eye for the leading part. On November 30 he wrote to Ellen Terry :

I have written to Terriss to tell him that I have kept my promise to him and have “a strong drama” with a part for him ; but I want your opinion ; for I have never tried melodrama before ; and this thing, with its heroic sacrifice, its impossible court martial, its execution (imagine W. T. *hanged* before the eyes of the Adelphi !) its sobbings and speeches and declamations, may possibly be the most monstrous piece of farcical absurdity that ever made an audience shriek with laughter. And yet I honestly tried for dramatic effect. I think you could give me a really *dry* opinion on it ; for it will not tickle you like *Arms and the Man* and *You Never Can Tell*, nor get at your sympathetic side like *Candida* (the heroine is not the hero of the piece this time) ; and you will have to drudge conscientiously through it like a stage carpenter and tell me whether it is burlesque or not.

But now that I think of it, all this is premature. The play only exists as a tiny scrawl in my note books—things I carry about in my pockets. I shall have to revise it and work out all the stage business, besides reading up the history of the American War of Independence before I can send it to the typist to be readably copied. Meanwhile, I can read it to Terriss, and to

other people, but not to—well, no matter: I don't ask that the veil of the temple shall be rent ; on the contrary, I am afraid in my very soul, to come stumping in my thickbooted, coarse, discordant reality, into that realm where a magic Shaw, a phantasm, a thing who looks delicate and a boy (twelve stalls and a bitock off) poses fantastically before a really lovely Ellen.

In the writing of *The Devil's Disciple*, the character Mrs. Dudgeon was based on Dickens's Mrs. Clennan. That she was not "created" by Shaw may explain the fact that she is about the only character in all his works with whom there is no sympathy of the author revealed. The play was completed in 1897.

*The Devil's Disciple* is on the side of the libertarians. The aggressive feminine appears again, this time in a respectable wife. Shaw's daring in taking the stock situations of the old melodrama is overdone in allowing the hero to have the noose round his neck and be delivered at the eleventh hour. A feature of the play, and one that delayed its acceptance, was its courageous acceptance of the facts of the American Revolution which reflected on Britain. The play contains one of the best stage situations to be found in any play. The spiritual crux of the play is the reply of the hero when he is asked why he put himself in the position that would lead to his dying in place of another man :

I had no motive and I had no interest: all I can tell you is that when it came to the point whether I could take my head out of the noose and put another man's into it, I could not do it. I don't know why not: I see myself as a fool for my pains: but I could not and I cannot.

This is a testimony by Shaw that in its crises the crucial experience of life is mystical.

Shaw of course knew that he was melodramatizing but he added, "as Ellen Terry used to say of her acting, just that little bit of my own that makes all the difference."

#### 1897: SELF-REVELATIONS

In a letter to Ellen Terry on January 27, 1897, is a passage that classically reveals the strength of Shaw and his weakness :

In this world you must know *all* the points of view, and take One, and stick to it. In taking your side, don't trouble about its being the right side—north is no righter or wronger than south—but be sure that it is really yours, and then back it for all you are worth.

This is fundamental. Shaw is so utterly a mystic that he believes that it is possible for a human being to have a point of view which is absolute. This is wrong. It does matter that the side you take should be the right side. Samuel Butler was right when he wrote of Darwin and himself that what they really were after was to be on the right side. In an issue north can be right and south wrong. It is not enough to be true to yourself: you must get yourself first true to the truth.

In the same letter Shaw went on to say important—and true—things:

Never stagnate. Life is a constant becoming: all stages lead to the beginning of others.

The theatre is my battering ram as much as the platform or the press: that is why I want to drag it to the front. My capers are part of a bigger design than you think: Shakespeare, for instance, is to me one of the towers of the Bastille, and down he must come. Never mind your young families: omelettes are not made without breaking eggs; and I hate families.

Did you ever read Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung*? If so, do you remember Regan the dwarf, who taught the people all the arts and lived on and on, the new generations not knowing that he had taught anything and ascribing all his work to Bragi and the rest of the gods. Well, what I say to-day, everybody will say to-morrow, though they will not remember who put it into their heads. Indeed, they will be right; for I never remember who puts the things into my head—it is the *Zeitgeist*.

Your reproaches are undeserved. I have not been unfaithful to you. But I am like the madman in Peer Gynt who thought himself a pen and wanted someone to write with him. That was wise of you. But the green-eyed one [Miss Payne-Townshend] was also wise in her way—the way that was your way when you were at her stage of the journey. She used me too, and so far widened my life. I am not for all hands to wield; so I do not throw away my chances. You say you do not compete: well, you need not. I do not compete with all the men you love (more or less—I am convinced that with you a human relation is love or nothing); there I am, not possibly to be confused with any of them, and ten times better realized because of the knowledge you have gained from them than if you knew nobody but me. Just so you are not injured by the filling-up with Emeralds (*schöne grüne Augen*) of that castle of my life which you left unfilled.

In a letter to Ellen Terry of March 13, Shaw struggles to convey the difference between a gentleman as conventionally understood and a spiritual gentleman. He points out that so far as her conscious mind is concerned, she is a *conventional* lady, but her actions show that she is a spiritual lady: she defies convention for due cause. Shaw's aim with her is to awaken her wisdom which is still asleep.

I never deceived you about that or anything else; and I never laughed at anybody. (This is the holy serious truth.)

In this year occurred the open quarrel between Henry Irving and Shaw. During the period of his drama criticism for *The Saturday Review* Shaw relentlessly criticized Henry Irving and the Lyceum for being reactionary and entirely out of the movement. Irving took the option of *The Man of Destiny* and Shaw, desiring to see Ellen Terry act the part written for her, agreed. After holding up the play for long, Irving publicly attacked Shaw. In a letter to Ellen Terry on April 21 Shaw wrote: "Take his part and console him: it is when a man is too much hurt to do the perfectly magnanimous thing that he most needs standing by."

Shaw's friends, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Phillimore, members of the St. Pancras Vestry administering the local government of a quarter of a million Londoners, made a deal with their anti-Progressive opponent

whereby certain nominees of theirs were elected without a contest. In this way Shaw became a member of the Vestry on May 18. In this capacity of borough councillor he continued to serve for six years in the most exemplary manner.

In a letter to Ellen Terry in June he wrote :

When I can think, when I can write, then my ideas fly like stones : you can never be sure that one of them will not hurt you. My very love gets knit into an infernal intellectual fabric that wounds when I mean it to caress ; and when I am tired and foolish I am flat and apparently bored. Sometimes that happens to my articles ; and then I am terrified indeed, and must work fiercely to remedy it.

It may be worth while to call attention to the similarity in style between these letters and that of Keats's.

In a letter of July 4 he has a passage on acting, in which he points out that an actor who acts consciously cannot stand the strain of a heavy part for long : routine acting becomes a necessity if a heavy part is to be played continuously. The attempt to act heavy parts consciously and continuously is the explanation of so many artists of this type having taken to drink.

On the 14th he writes :

Oh why won't women be content to leave their stars in the heavens and not want to tear them down and hang them round their necks with a gold ring ! Why does

their pleasure turn to pain and their love to hate without their knowing that it has happened?

He goes on to reveal that this was called forth by another lady trying to annex him and in comic despair he contemplates a monastery or a prosaic marriage.

In *The Saturday Review* for August 26, Shaw dealt with flogging :

A cruel punishment is one which gratifies a passion in those who inflict it, witness it, or imagine it. . . Even the anger, disgust, and contempt of the humane people who avoid such spectacles and protest against them is passionate, and is probably degrading.

On September 8 he writes to Ellen Terry that to an artist love is only diversion and recreation. To have attained is to have control, and to have control means that one must have the power to do without.

That's why the women who fall in love with me worry me and torment me and make scenes (which they can't act) with me and suffer misery and destroy their health and beauty, whilst you, who could do without me as easily as I could do without Julia (for instance) are my blessing and refuge, and really care more for *everybody* (including myself) than Julia cared for me. It is also, alas ! why I act the lover so diabolically well that even the women who are clever enough to understand that such a person as myself might exist, can't bring themselves to believe that I am that person.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These experiences of Shaw's are reflected in his plays from *The Philanderer* to *The Apple Cart*.

Shaw at this time was working on the revision of his plays for publication, subjecting them to the most minute scrutiny.

In the same letter in which he tells of this he writes:

I would teach that rapscallionly flower girl of his [Forbes Robertson's] something. *Caesar and Cleopatra* has been driven clean out of my head by a play I want to write for them in which he shall be a west end gentleman and she an east end dona in an apron and three orange and red ostrich feathers.<sup>1</sup>

In this year, 1897, Shaw published in a volume entitled *Forecasts of the Coming Century*, an article called "The Illusions of Socialism." He himself practised the dramatic illusion

which presents the working-class as a victorious hero and heroine in the toils of a villain called the capitalist, suffering terribly and struggling nobly, but with a happy ending for them, and a fearful retribution for the villain, in full view before the fall of the curtain on a future of undisturbed bliss. In this drama, the proletarian finds somebody in love, to sympathize with, and to champion, whom he associates with himself; and somebody to execrate and feel indignantly superior to, whom he can identify with the social tyranny from which he suffers. Socialism is thus presented on the platform exactly as life is presented on the stage of the Adelphi Theatre, quite falsely and conventionally, but it is the only way in which the audience can be induced to take an interest in it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *Pygmalion*. The lady referred to was Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Henderson, 1932, p. 238.

On October 1, 1897, *The Devil's Disciple* was produced in America, at Albany, and was Shaw's first box-office success.

#### SHAW'S DRAMATIC CRITICISM

The papers on the drama which Shaw wrote at this period of his life are admirably fresh, original, and able, to the point of genius. The titles sound a new note of freedom—"Poor Shakespeare," "Two Bad Plays," "Mr. Irving Takes Paregoric," "Sardoodledom."

His dramatic criticism is set in and consistent with his philosophy. Democracy as commonly understood is here again rejected: "they needs must *hate* the highest when they see it. Why should we credit these unhappy persons with that attribute of the highest character, the power of liking what pleases them, of believing in it, of standing by those who give it to them? For the most part, they never enjoy anything; they are always craving for stimulants, whereas the essence of art is recreation. . . . Torment is the public's natural element: it is only the saint who has any capacity for happiness. There is no greater mistake in theology than to suppose that it is necessary to lock people into hell and out of heaven. . . . The artist's rule must be Cromwell's: 'not what they want but what is good for them.' That rule, carried out in a friendly and sociable way, is the secret of success in the long run in the theatre as elsewhere." "Half the use of the boards is as a pedestal on which

to set a well-painted, well-dressed woman in a strong light, to please the man who is tired of the mother of sorrows and drudgery at home.” But in the greatest artists “the immense pressure of thought and labour” earns for them “that rarest of all faiths, faith in their real selves.” “Every woman who sees Duse play Magda feels that Duse is speaking for her and for all women as hardly ever are they able to act and speak for themselves. . . . There is only one way to defy time: and that is to have young ideas, which may be trusted to find youthful and vivid expression.” “If my own father were an actor-manager, and his life depended on his getting favourable notices of his performance, I should orphan myself without an instant’s hesitation if he acted badly. I am by no means the willing victim of this instinct. I am keenly susceptible to contrary influences . . . but the critical instinct gets the better of them all.”

Here is a specimen of Shaw’s criticism of acting: “He, having to leave the stage with the innocent words, ‘Come and see us as soon as you can,’ showed us how the experienced hand can manufacture an effective exit. He went to the door with ‘Come and see us as soon.’ Then he nerved himself; opened the door; turned dauntlessly; and with raised voice and sparkling eyes hurled the significant words ‘as you can’ in the teeth of the gallery.”

In these papers he deals with various topics incidentally. For example, the problem of divorce: “Under the English law a mistake in marriage cannot be

remedied except by the disgrace of either party—that is to say, cannot be remedied at all by decent people, divorce being a boon reserved to reward the dissolute.” Later he speaks of “open scandal and collusory divorce, involving the public announcement of cruelties and adulteries that have never been committed.” In another passage he will reveal deep insight into ordinary human life: “Your normal, respectable man will countenance, connive at, and grovel his way through all sorts of meanness, baseness, servility, and cruel indifference to suffering in order to enjoy a miserable two-pennorth of social position, piety, comfort, and domestic affection, of which he is often ironically defrauded by fate: men do every day, with a frightful fatalism, abjectly accept for themselves as well as others all the consequences of theories as to what they ought to feel and ought to believe, although they do not so feel or believe, but often feel and believe the very reverse, or find themselves forced to act on their real feeling and belief in supreme moments which they are willing with a tragically ridiculous self-abnegation to expiate afterwards with their lives.”

A very important passage is the following one. One of the chief criticisms brought against Shaw has been that he says things in a form that is highly irritating. The following passage shows that he has done so (within limits) deliberately. He came to the practice as the result of experience and experiment.

*In this world, if you do not say a thing in an irritating way, you may as well not say it at all, since nobody will trouble*

*themselves about anything that does not trouble them. The attention given to a criticism is in direct proportion to its indigestibility.*<sup>1</sup>

On the art of the theatre he has the following illuminating passage—he is speaking of women who would become actresses :

It takes years of practice to develop their power of emotional expression ; for most educated women have been trained to fight against emotional expression because it is a mode of self-betrayal. Now self-betrayal, magnified to suit the optics of the theatre, is the whole art of acting ; and the strong, continent woman, unless she is descended from generations of actors, is certain to be beaten at first on the stage by the hysterical, incontinent one, or even by the stupid, prosaic, hereditary actress who, within certain limits, acts as a duck swims.

The importance of real comedy he indicates in the following pregnant passage :

To laugh without sympathy is a ruinous abuse of a noble function ; and the degradation of any race may be measured by the degree of their addiction to it. . . . The deliberate, derisive joy in humiliation and suffering is the beastliest element in human nature. . . . I class the laughter produced by conventional farcical comedy as purely galvanic, and the inference drawn by the audience that since they are laughing, they must be amused or edified or pleased, as a delusion. They are really being more or less worried and exhausted and upset by ill-natured cachinnation ; and the proof is that they

<sup>1</sup> The importance of this passage, as is suggested in the text, does not end with the date at which it was written. Later, Shaw tested the matter, had the same result, and confirmed the principle in practice.

generally leave the theatre tired and out of humour with themselves and the world.

As a contribution to education he says that

the average young university graduate . . . has been trained to do nothing that could possibly involve error, failure, self-assertion, or ridicule; and the results of this genteelly negative policy are about as valuable as those which might be expected by a person who should enter for a swimming race with a determination to do nothing that could possibly expose him to the risk of getting wet.

Shaw's own mind is illuminated for us by his referring to people who are "unable to recognize a feeling when it is presented to them in the form of a thought."

In an article on dramatic critics he says, "Some day they [i.e., the generic 'they'] will reprint my articles" and he goes on, writing of George Henry Lewes to speak of the

true craftsman, intent on making the measurements and analyses of his criticism as accurate and their expression as clear and vivid, as possible, instead of allowing himself to be distracted by the vanity of playing the elegant man of letters, or writing with perfect good taste, or hinting in every line that he was above his work . . . exacting all this from himself, and taking his revenge by expressing his most laboured conclusions with a levity that gave them the air of being the un-premeditated whimsicalities of a man who had perversely taken to writing about the theatre for the jest latent in his own outrageous unfitness for it.

I shall not marry, morganatically or otherwise. Eminent lady novelists will please accept this notice.

On the “*dating*” of plays he writes:

Fashions change more quickly than manners, manners more quickly than morals, morals more quickly than passions, and, in general, the conscious, reasonable, intellectual life more quickly than the instinctive, wilful, affectionate one. The dramatist who deals with the irony and humour of the relatively durable sides of life, or with their pity and terror, is the one who will last longest. . . . Every “immortal” play will run the following course. First, its manners and fashions will begin to date. If its matter is deep enough to tide over this danger, it will come into repute again, like the comedies of Sheridan or Goldsmith, as a modern classic. But after some time—some centuries, perhaps—it will begin to date in respect of its ethical conception. Yet if it deals so powerfully with the instincts and passions of humanity as to survive this also, it will again regain its place, this time as an antique classic, especially if it tells a capital story.

Religion is indicated by Shaw to lie in the direction of “wisdom of heart, and sense of identity and common cause with others.” “The main peril of the age” is the “divorce of the imagined life from the real, when everybody is provided with the means of substituting reading and romancing for real living.”

#### 1898: SHAW'S PUBLICATION OF PLAYS: ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION: MARRIAGE

Finding the production of his plays obstructed by the censorship and other things, Shaw proceeded to publish them. Up to this time, publication of plays was of two kinds: (1) that of a poet like Tennyson or

Browning (2) "acting" editions with professional technicalities and reliance on technical interpretation. Shaw invented a method of publication of first-rate importance, viz., the supplying of succinct descriptions of the scenes, furniture, characters, principal movements and actions of the characters, lightning descriptions of their states of mind. The signal intelligence and ability with which Shaw worked this out are really great.

Writing to Ellen Terry on January 5, Shaw said, with reference to Edward Aveling:

He has his good points, has Edward: for instance, he does not deny his faiths, and will nail his atheism and socialism to the masthead incorruptibly enough. But he is incorrigible when women or money or the fulfilment of his engagements (especially prepaid ones) are in question.

Then there is a remarkable revelation of what Shaw did in revising the proofs of his plays:

The book of plays still creeps through the press. Oh those proofs, those proofs! Imagine going through a play again and again, scanning the commas, and sticking in words to make the printing look decent—to get the rivers of white out of it!

In 1898 he wrote the preface to a volume of *Plays Unpleasant*. In it he affirms his belief in

equality as the only possible permanent basis of social organization, discipline, subordination, good manners, and selection of fit persons for high functions.

He tells of having had his eyes tested, of his having been told that they were normal and then discovering

how rare normal vision is. This was a parable of the mind. He could not sell his fiction, but his normal mental vision when expressed in criticism of art, music, and drama, produced the effect on his readers of brilliant paradox, and this sold ; but his journalism he could not keep up, so he was publishing his plays. Moreover, publication would be his response to the banning of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* from the stage by the Censor. Still further, the reading of plays evaded the difficulty of getting plays acted as the author wanted them to be acted ; and by Shaw's new method of publication, indications were given as to this. Shaw's acquaintance with phonetics and printing is revealed —the latter, for example, in the use of spaced letters instead of italics. But the preface ends on the subject-matter of the plays and includes the following prophetic passage :

We have great prostitute classes of men : for instance, the dramatists and journalists, to whom I myself belong, not to mention the legions of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and platform politicians, who are daily using their highest faculties to belie their real sentiments : a sin compared to which that of a woman who sells the use of her person for a few hours is too venial to be worth mentioning.

In 1898, in *The Saturday Review* for February 26, appeared an article by Shaw in which he wrote :

In dealing with Englishmen, you must make them believe that you are appealing to their brains when you are really appealing to their senses and feelings. With Frenchmen, you must make them believe that you are

appealing to their senses and feelings when you are really appealing to their brains.

In April, 1898, Shaw stated to an interviewer: " *The Devil's Disciple*, which has been running in America, has drawn £25,000; and on that I get ten per cent. I should have to write my heart out for six years in *The Saturday* to make as much." This marks Shaw's economic emancipation.

In 1898 Archer wrote:

The most significant event of the theatrical season did not occur in the theatre, but in the book-market—the appearance of Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Candida*. The fact that this play and *The Devil's Disciple* still await production in London shows that the conditions of the theatre are hostile to originality; but the existence of such originality is the main thing; it must, in the long run, make its own conditions.

Shaw's invention of his method of printing his plays for the general reader has had consequences which are truly immense. It made plays really readable, and plays became read books, establishing Shaw as an author. But, in addition to this, it is not too much to say that this led to the renaissance in modern English drama. To this there is ample testimony from younger writers of plays themselves.

In May, 1898, Shaw resigned his position as dramatic critic to *The Saturday Review*.

In the last two years Shaw and Miss Payne-Townshend had got to like each other so much that, as Shaw wrote to Ellen Terry, there was no need to fall in love. They were fond of each other. Shaw got

an abscess on an instep and when Miss Payne-Townshend went to see him, she was taken aback by the discomfort of his circumstances in the very easy-going Shaw household. She wanted to take him away and see to him properly. Although both of them had been averse from marriage, both had become less averse from marriage to the other. Shaw now insisted that the only way in which her proposal could be properly carried out was by her going out and getting a ring and a licence. They were married on June 1. Shaw was on crutches and in an old jacket worn for and by the crutches, at the wedding at a registrar's office. One of the witnesses was Graham Wallas, who was attired as for a wedding, and he was taken by the registrar for the bridegroom. According to the story, Shaw intervened only in time to prevent the lady being married to the wrong man.

In 1898 Shaw wrote

#### “ CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA ”

He had Forbes Robertson in his mind for Caesar. He wrote *Caesar and Cleopatra* for Forbes Robertson because the latter was the one classic actor of the time, the one who could play the part, and because as such Forbes Robertson had the right to require such a service from him.<sup>1</sup> The play is another of his studies of genius. Caesar apostrophizes the Sphinx: “I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman, and part God.” Cleopatra says, “Do

<sup>1</sup> Shaw in *The Play Pictorial*, 1913.

you speak with Caesar every day for six months and you will be changed. . . . When I was foolish, I did what I liked, except when Ftataeteeta beat me; and even then I cheated her and did it by stealth. Now that Caesar has made me wiser, it is no use my liking or disliking: I do what must be done, and have no time to attend to myself. That is not happiness; but it is greatness." Caesar, she says, is kind to all because it is his nature, so magnanimous is he. The great man is the true individual: other people are much of a muchness "One year of Rome," says Caesar, "is like another, except that I grow older, whilst the crowd in the Appian Way is always the same age." So Shaw uses in the historical play the method that may be called contemporaneousness: he describes the Briton of Caesar's time as like the Briton of to-day: man has not progressed in the ways that really matter.

*Caesar and Cleopatra* is a brilliant piece of sustained imagination, and yet it is only in passages that it grips.

Forbes Robertson was enthusiastic over the play and the rôle of Caesar, but did not "create" the part.

A review by Shaw of Tolstoy's *What is Art?* appeared in *The Daily Chronicle* for September 10, 1898. Commenting on Tolstoy's definition of art as "an activity by means of which one man, having experienced a feeling, intentionally transmits it to another," Shaw wrote, "This is the simple truth; the moment

it is uttered, whoever is really conversant with art recognizes in it the voice of the master."<sup>1</sup>

In a communication to *The Times* for September 27, 1898, on the duty of a jury, Shaw made the point that the jury's verdict must depend, not only on whether they decide that the accused performed the action at issue, but also whether the circumstances were such as to make the action a guilty one. If the accused was crazy when he committed the act, but in his normal condition was a harmless and reputable man, then he was not guilty of—let us say—wilful murder.

### 1899

The copyrighting performance of *Caesar and Cleopatra* was given at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on March 15, 1899, by Mrs. Patrick Campbell and her London company, including Granville Barker. In the version of the play then presented there was a very amusing scene in which appeared a Syrian, a Nabatean, a Rhodian and a Cretan. (This was afterwards left out.) In the programme the following observations were printed:

*Period of the Play*—The end of the XXXIII Dynasty in Egypt. The winter of 706–7 in Rome. Christian Computation, October, 48 B.C. to March, 47 B.C.

*The Action* takes place in Egypt, the first Act on the Syrian Border, the remaining four in Alexandria.

*The Play* follows history as closely as stage exigencies permit. Critics should consult Manetho and the

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 286.

Egyptian Monuments, Herodotus, Strabo (Book 17), Plutarch, Pomponius Mela, Pliny, Tacitus, Appian of Alexandria, and, perhaps, Ammianus Marcellinus.

Ordinary spectators, if unfamiliar with the ancient tongues, may refer to Mommsen, Warde Fowler, Mr. St. George Stock's Introduction to the 1908 Clarendon Press Edition of *Caesar's Gallic Wars*, and Murray's *Handbook of Egypt*. Many of these authorities have consulted their imaginations, more or less. The author has done the same.

Shaw later, for Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson's farewell performance at Drury Lane, omitted the first scenes of the first and fourth acts of the original version and substituted a prologue, which is very effective and satirical. Ra, the god of ancient Egypt speaks:

Ye are a dull folk, and instruction is wasted on you ; and I had not spoken so much but that it is in the nature of a god to struggle for ever with the dust and the darkness, and to drag from them, by the fire of his longing for the divine, more life and more light.

In a letter written in 1899, on April 19, Shaw referred to "the pleasure of lending money to impecunious persons on an income of £300."

#### "CAPTAIN BRASSBOUND'S CONVERSION"

When her son, Gordon Craig, became a father, Ellen Terry, in writing to Shaw, said that no one would write plays for a grandmother. Shaw immediately, on May 3, 1899, began to write a play to prove the contrary. The scenario Shaw took from a book by

Cunningham Graham on Morocco and he again shows his versatility both in this and in the characterization. The play was at first tentatively named *The Witch of Atlas*. Writing to Ellen Terry on July 14, he said that it "ought to be done in a small theatre to get the best effect out of it." Ellen Terry did not recognize herself in Lady Cicely, but in a letter to Shaw on August 20 she told how, catching her maid very amused, and asking her why, she got the answer: "Lady Cicely is *so* like you! She gets her way in everything—*just like you!*"

On September 26, 1899, was the première in England of *The Devil's Disciple*. Grein, in his review of it, called Shaw "one of the greatest intellectual forces in modern England":

*The Devil's Disciple* stands alone in our dramatic literature on a plane of its own, and that plane, I am bold enough to assert, will remain unapproached so long as most of our other authors, unlike Bernard Shaw, consider the stage as a mere vehicle for amusement and profit.

In his notes to *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* Shaw wrote a telling paradox in referring to a tale "with an edge that will cut the soft cruel hearts and strike fire from the hard, kind ones."

1900: THE BOER WAR: "FABIANISM AND THE EMPIRE,"  
"THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE"

In a letter to Hyndman of April, 1900, Shaw wrote, *à propos* South Africa, that the worship of

Jehovah was worse than the worship of Mammon, for

whereas Jehovah makes change of mind impossible and stands for the false categories of moral good and evil in nature, and consequently for implacable war, punishment, enmity, aggression, and repression between men, my sympathies are with Mammon, his instinctive greed for gold and diamonds being much less dangerous than the reason and virtue which, on the moralist system, makes man, as Mephistopheles says, beastlier than any beast. Jehovah is mighty ; for he has his chains on men's minds. Your wretched Barnatos and Rothschilds have nothing but the cash nexus, by the utmost tightening of which they cannot get ten hours' real good work of the British workmen in a week.

In 1900 Shaw wrote the preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*. He says that art must be saved from being confused with sensuousness, at all costs, and protests against pretence : " Produce me your best critic, and I will criticize his head off." He replies to attacks made on him to the effect that he advertises himself, by saying that he does, and that it is requisite that he should. He claims that some of his work is better than Shakespeare's : he does not profess, however, to write better plays : certain successes in art are unique and Shakespeare is one of them. An author of to-day may have something to say, nevertheless, that neither Homer nor Shakespeare said, and each new generation requires to have things said in the symbolism of its own time.

I shall perhaps enjoy a few years of immortality. But the whirligig of time will soon bring my audiences

to my own point of view ; and then the next Shakespeare that comes along will turn these petty tentatives of mine into masterpieces final for their epoch. By that time my twentieth-century characteristics will pass unnoticed as a matter of course, whilst the eighteenth-century artificiality that marks the work of every literary Irishman of my generation will seem antiquated and silly. . . . Reputations are cheap nowadays. Even were they dear, it would still be impossible for any public-spirited citizen to hope that the flood of general enlightenment may never rise above his miserable high-water mark. I hate to think that Shakespeare has lasted 300 years, though he got no further than Koheleth the Preacher, who died many centuries before him ; or that Plato, more than 2,000 years old, is still ahead of our voters. We must hurry on ; we must get rid of reputations : they are weeds in the soil of ignorance. Cultivate the soil, and they will flower most beautifully, but only as annuals. If this preface will at all help to get rid of mine, the writing of it will have been well worth the pains.

#### “ FABIANISM AND THE EMPIRE ”

A method adopted by the Fabian Society for issuing a pronouncement was to get someone to draft one, circulate the draft to all the members, invite comments from them, and alter, in the light of the comments sent in, the draft into a final form according to the best of the original writer's judgment. The Boer War raised in an acute form the problem of empire, and it is greatly to the credit of those Fabians, that they faced it. Shaw, who surprised friends of his by not being pro-Boer, was called upon by the Society to undertake a pronouncement on Fabianism and the

Empire. Mr. Pease, the then secretary of the Society, has written :

Shaw is fond of posing as the most conceited of persons, but those who have to do with him in literary matters are aware that no pose was ever more preposterous. When he has acted as the literary expert of the Fabian Society, he has considered every criticism with unruffled courtesy, and dealt with the many fools who always find their way into extreme parties, not according to their folly, but with the careful consideration properly accorded to eminent wisdom. The business of examining over a hundred marked proofs of a document of 20,000 words, every word of which was more or less controversial, was an immense one, but the author gave every criticism its proper weight and accepted every useful amendment.

The prescience, as subsequent history has proved it to have been, that is shown in this little book, is remarkable :

The problem before us is how the world can be ordered by Great Powers of practically international extent, arrived at a degree of internal industrial and political development far beyond the primitive political economy of the founders of the United States and the Anti-Corn Law League. The partition of the greater part of the globe among such Powers is, as a matter of fact that must be faced, approvingly or deploredly, now only a question of time ; and whether England is to be the centre and nucleus of one of those Great Powers of the future, or to be cast off by its colonies, ousted from its provinces, and reduced to its old island status, will depend on the ability with which the Empire is governed as a whole.

As to that government's form, the masses are still in so deplorable a condition that democracy, in the popular sense of government by the masses, is clearly contrary to common sense. . . . The result is that our constitution, whatever it may be nominally, is in fact a plutocracy. . . . The primary conditions of Imperial stability are not the same throughout the Empire. The democratic institutions that mean freedom in Australasia and Canada would mean slavery in India and the Soudan. . . . We forbid the sale of the Bible in Khartoum, and punish British subjects in India for blasphemy against Vishnu.

The development of the consular service for trade purposes is advocated:

Any person who thinks this application of Socialism to foreign trade through the consular system impossible, also thinks that the survival of his country in the age of the Powers is impossible. No German thinks it impossible. If he has not already achieved it, he intends to.

The only alternative is protection. "When once the feeling that 'something must be done' seizes us," protection will be adopted.

As regards the distribution of the earth among the Great Powers,

the notion that a nation has the right to do what it pleases with its own territory, without reference to the interests of the rest of the world, is no more tenable than the notion that a landlord has a right to do what he likes with his estate without reference to the interests of his neighbours. . . . The value of a State to the world lies in the quality of its civilization. . . . There is therefore

no question of the steam-rolling of little States became they are little, any more than of their maintenance in deference to romantic nationalism. The State which obstructs international civilization will have to go, be it big or little. That which advances it should be defended by all the Western Powers. . . . However ignorantly its politicians may argue about it, defending themselves with quibbles from waste-paper treaties and childish slanders against a brave enemy, the fact remains that a Great Power, consciously or unconsciously, must govern in the interests of the world as a whole ; and it is not to these interests that such mighty forces should be wielded by small communities of frontiersmen. Theoretically, they should be internationalized, not British-Imperialized ; but until the Federation of the World becomes an accomplished fact, we must accept the most responsible Imperial federations available as a substitute for it.

As regards the problem of South Africa, the problem then immediately in front, what ought to be done is to "guarantee a free constitution and responsible government within the Empire to the white inhabitants." As the matter of a flag "may easily cause more irritation than more substantial matters, we may as well bear in mind that the Canadian Dominion and the Australasian colonies all have their own flags."

One of the great problems confronting Empire statesmen is, of course, that of armed forces :

It is to be hoped that the Powers will soon have the good sense to take concerted steps to use their armaments as an international police to suppress war.

In the meantime, there ought to be a great British army. It

must be created by giving to the whole male population an effective training in the use of arms, without removing them from civilian life. This can be done, without conscription or barrack life, by so amending the Factory Acts as to extend the age for "half-time" employment to twenty-one, and devoting the twenty hours a week thus gained from the factory and the mine to a combination of physical exercises, technical education, education in civil citizenship, and field training in the use of modern weapons. No payment beyond a supper would be needed to make the drills popular.

As regards the existing Army, the following reforms are proposed:

I. Full civil rights, including the abolition of compulsory celibacy and of residence in barracks when off duty on home service.

II. A "living wage," according to the current standard, for the members of the professional force as for other public officials.

III. Service up to the age of superannuation, and then an adequate pension, with the ordinary right to leave the force at any time on giving reasonable notice, as in a municipal Fire Brigade.

IV. A salary for officers on the civil scale, with a sufficiently high standard of preliminary qualifications and daily work to make their profession a serious one.

"The moral of it all [i.e., the whole book, *Fabianism and the Empire*] is that what the British Empire wants is not Conservatism, not Liberalism, not Imperialism, but brains and political science."

Surely it is remarkable that these things were written in 1900, before "the return to protection," before the Great War, before its aftermaths, before the consular services were developed in the interest of trade, before the League of Nations, before "mandates," before the constitution was granted to South Africa, before the Great War revealed the need for these reforms in the army, before the South African flag was a problem. Can this prescience be paralleled?

#### "THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE"

In 1900 Shaw wrote a dramatic version of *Cashel Byron's Profession*. He did so in order to have the copyright of stage versions of the novel. "It may be asked why I have written *The Admirable Bashville* in blank verse. My answer is that I had but a week to write it in. Blank verse is so childishly easy and expeditious<sup>1</sup> (hence, by the way, Shakespeare's copious

<sup>1</sup> Many people doubt this. I will therefore quote an advertisement for a brand of travelling cases (with the name disguised) :

LAERTES : My necessaries are embarked : and how !

Didst thou not note, my well-beloved sister,  
My luggage, product of fine craftsmanship,  
Wherein my choice apparel's safely stowed ?  
Its brand, The AMBIENT, is my strong safeguard.  
All confidence I feel that, on arrival,  
My doublets fine, my goodly silken hose  
Will be unsullied, even as I packed them.

OPHELIA : In truth, dear brother, I did note the trunks  
And their resilience when they had to bear  
The most unkindly buffetings of the porters  
As clumsily they did embark them.

Unbounded confidence it seems thou hast  
In luggage of this brand, The AMBIENT.

LAERTES : 'Tis very true I have. Thou knowest, Ophelia,  
When I at Wittenberg with Hamlet was at school,  
Oft we incurred, for some mad prank, our tutor's censure

output), that by adopting it I was enabled to do within a week what would have cost me a month in prose."

It is a most amusing version, the blank verse lending great piquancy. But of course, the serious elements in the novel are not allowed to be less effective.

this hand,

That many a two days bruise hath ruthless given,  
 Hath kept no dungeon locked for twenty years,  
 Hath slain no sentient creature for my sport.  
 I am too squeamish for your dainty world,  
 That cowers behind the gallows and the lash,  
 The world that robs the poor, and with their spoil  
 Does what its tradesmen tell it. O your ladies !  
 Seal-skinned and egret-feathered ; all defiance  
 To Nature ; cowering if one say to them,  
 " What will the servants think ? " Your gentlemen !  
 Your tailor-tyrannized visitors, of whom  
 Flutter of wing and singing in the wood  
 Make chicken butchers. And your medicine men !  
 Groping for cures in the tormented entrails  
 Of friendly dogs.

The satire in the following lines, again, is pungent :  
 Each pallid English face conceals a brain  
 Whose powers are proven in the works of Newton  
 And in the plays of the immortal Shakespeare.

And frequent to the whipping-stool were taken.  
 Then, then, my sister, acted we with cunning,  
 For 'twixt our nether garments and our skins  
 Inserted we a sheet of AMBIENT fibre  
 And earned the name of hero from our fellows  
 For our most seeming stoical behaviour  
 Under the searching pedagogic lash ;  
 And as that goodly substance did defend  
 My person, so to-day my sturdy trunks  
 (For ten years guaranteed) will safely stand  
 Against all accident and misadventure.

There is not one of all the thousands here  
 But, if you placed him naked in the desert,  
 Would presently construct a steam engine,  
 And lay a cable t' th' Antipodes.

The way in which blank verse is adapted by Shaw to express character is brilliantly exemplified in the following speech of the professional bruiser:

Your royal highness, you beholds a bloke  
 What gets his living honest by his fists.  
 I may not have the polish of some toffs  
 As I could mention on ; but up to now  
 No man has took my number down. I scale  
 Close on twelve stun ; my age is twenty-three ;  
 And at Bill Richardson's Blue Anchor pub  
 Am to be heard of any day by such  
 As likes the job.

At the copyrighting performance of *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, Ellen Terry, as she was taking a curtain call, saw Shaw for the first time. She was surprised to find him "a good, kind, gentle creature." The first regular performance of the play was given by the Stage Society on December 16, 1900, with Janet Achurch as Lady Cicely, Laurence Irving as Captain Brassbound, and Granville Barker as Captain Kearney.

#### 1901-1903: "MAN AND SUPERMAN"

Between 1901 and 1903 Shaw was at work on *Man and Superman: a Comedy and a Philosophy*. A. B. Walkley, the dramatic critic of *The Times*, had once

asked him why he did not write a play on the story of Don Juan. This play was Shaw's response to the challenge. He gave the Don Juan theme in terms of the English life of his (Shaw's) own time, as interpreted by himself. Don Juan is the proverbial "lady-killer." Shaw presented a view of woman as the pursuer of a man of Shaw's type in obedience to the instinctive cunning of nature, with the unconscious purpose of producing offspring from the able man and the philoprogenitive woman.

The part of Ann Whitefield was written for Lillah McCarthy. Describing John Tanner (thus he Englished the Don Juan names), he gives what is tantamount to a description of a combination of Hyndman and himself:

He has still something of the slimness of youth ; but youthfulness is not what he aims at : his frock coat would befit a prime minister ; and a certain high chested carriage of his shoulders, a lofty pose of the head, and the Olympian majesty with which a mane, or rather a huge wisp, of hazel coloured hair is thrown back from an imposing brow, suggest Jupiter rather than Apollo. He is prodigiously fluent of speech, restless, excitable (mark the snorting nostril and the restless blue eye, just the thirty-seventh of an inch too wide open), possibly a little mad. He is carefully dressed, not from the vanity that cannot resist finery, but from a sense of the importance of everything he does, which leads him to make as much of paying a call as other men do of getting married or laying a foundation stone. A sensitive, susceptible, exaggerated, earnest man : a megalomaniac, who would be lost without a sense of humour.

Shaw shows that he knows the romantic experience. To Octavius in the presence of Ann the limits of his "individual consciousness are suddenly made infinite by a mystic memory of the whole life of the race to its beginnings in the east, or even back in the paradise from which it fell. She is to him the reality of romance, the inner good sense of nonsense, the unveiling of his eyes, the freeing of his soul, the abolition of time, place, and circumstance, the etherialization of his blood into rapturous rivers of the very water of life itself, the revelation of all the mysteries and the sanctification of all the dogmas." The rational Shaw sees that "with a wonderful instinctive cunning, she kept silent and allowed me to glorify her ; to mistake my own visions, thoughts and feelings for hers." Ann, the typical woman, while insisting on everybody else doing what the conventional code prescribes, does what she wants, pretending that she is acting with conventionally approved motives. If, for example, she has children, she will take advantage of their telling lies to amuse herself with whipping them. But, as a matter of fact, she is an agent of the Life Force to get a father for her children, and the man selected by her falls under the spell of the Life Force also :

TANNER : The Life Force enchant me : I have the whole world in my arms when I clasp you. But I am fighting for my freedom, for my honour, for myself, one and indivisible.

ANN : Your happiness will be worth them all.

TANNER: You would sell freedom and honour and self for happiness?

TANNER: If we two stood on the edge of a precipice, I would hold you tight and jump.

ANN: Yes ; I don't care. I am at the end of my forces. I don't care.<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say, social criticism appears in the dialogue: "Are women taught better than men or worse? Are mobs of voters taught better than statesmen or worse? Worse, of course, in both cases. And then what sort of world are you going to get, with its public men considering its voting mobs, and its private men considering their wives?" A good specimen of Shaw's power as a debater is the following, in which he returns to the subject of divorce:—"Those who talk most about the blessings of marriage and the constancy of its vows are the very people who declare that if the chain were broken and the prisoners left free to choose, the whole social

<sup>1</sup> The depiction of Ann gave rise to great controversy. It is fair to Shaw to quote C. Gasquoine Hartley (Mrs. Gallichan), the well-known feminist writer, who endorses an utterance of a woman friend, "We may not like it, and, of course, we refuse to own it, but there is something of Ann in every woman." (*The Truth about W'oman*, p. 66.) Lillah McCarthy testifies, "Women, many of them, have told me that Ann brought them to life and that they re-modelled themselves upon Ann's pattern. . . . Mrs. Pankhurst, who Heaven knows never lacked resolution, herself told me that Ann Whitefield had strengthened her purpose and fortified her courage." (*Myself and My Friends*, p. 64.) In discussions after my lectures on Shaw there have been fierce debates by women on the issue. At the end of one, a woman blurted out, "We know it's true, but we don't like men to know it."

fabric would fly asunder. You cannot have the argument both ways. If the prisoner is happy, why lock him in? If he is not, why pretend that he is?" This illustrates a weakness of Shaw's. His ability conceals the fact that there is another position: people may need to be protected from temptation.

Act III of *Man and Superman* is an act by itself and can be omitted from performance (as it usually is). It is on a plane of its own in another sense: its imaginative quality and its profundity together constitute it a masterpiece.

In Act III is elaborated the doctrine that it is not necessary to lock people into hell or out of heaven: most people are at the mercy of their instincts, they are not actuated even by their material interests when more fundamental instincts come into play: "The roulette table pays nobody except him that keeps it. Nevertheless a passion for gaming is common, though a passion for keeping roulette tables is unknown." The herd instinct can be stronger than sex, and, of course, than comfort: elsewhere in the play he says: "It is easier to recruit for monasteries and convents than to induce an Arab woman to uncover her mouth in public or a British officer to walk through Bond Street in a golfing cap on an afternoon in May." Knowledge is not proof against stupidity, nor is intelligence proof against ignorance: we find "Stupidity accusing Imagination of folly, and Imagination accusing Stupidity of ignorance; whereas, alas! Stupidity has all the knowledge and Imagination all

the intelligence." Quality of life alone matters : better ten dead men than one living basely. Man must become as *conscious* as he can : " I sing, not arms and the hero, but the philosophic man : he who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to do that will by the so-discovered means." " If my finger is the organ by which I grasp the sword . . . my brain is the organ by which Nature strives to understand itself." " We do the world's will, not our own."

This is real illumination ; but it may be suggested that Mr. Shaw has not sufficiently discriminated between the subconscious and the supra-conscious mind. It is going too far to be sure that in the universe there is no understanding higher than man's, or that, when we discover it, it may not be our duty to go against Nature. But in a famous passage in this play Mr. Shaw showed that the urge of the Life Force that he believed in is one to higher quality in life : " I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding." If this is so, the Life Force cannot be blind : it has the highest sense of values.

A very notable utterance in relation to Mr. Shaw's

philosophy is the following: " You clean men as you clean milk-pails, by scalding them."

Having introduced a revolutionist as a character in the play, Shaw hit upon the excellent idea, when he came to publish, of printing as an appendix a book by the revolutionist, referred to in the course of the action. This gave Shaw the opportunity to publish an accumulation of matter on sociology which he had thought out: it also gave him the fictionist's boon of being able to throw out ideas that may be worth thinking about without having the personal responsibility of standing for them. Thus, side by side with inspired utterances there are statements of which the explanation seems to be that they caught his ear as containing some profound meaning but in fact did not, as, for example, " Every man over forty is a scoundrel." It is a pity that Shaw did this sort of thing: it was part of the mistake of taking a point of view and sticking to it, whether right or wrong, because it was his own. But these spots ought not to blind us to his perceptions of real worth.

He discerns a Holy Spirit in Nature. What is needed is the man who can best obey it. He is the true superman. But he is not recognized by the world at large and his place in its regard is taken by its sham supermen. Man's " least incompetent general is set up as an Alexander ; his king is the first gentleman in the world ; his Pope is a saint. He is never without an array of human idols who are all nothing but sham supermen." What is needed by men in

general is self-control. "The survival of the fittest means finally the survival of the self-controlled." Because they are not self-controlled themselves, they are attracted to men who lack self-control: "Though in advanced modern states, where the artisan is better educated than the king, it takes a much bigger man to be a successful demagogue than to be a successful courtier, yet he who holds popular convictions with prodigious energy is the man for the mob, while the fraailer sceptic who is cautiously feeling his way towards the next century has no chance unless he happens by accident to have the specific artistic talent of the mountebank as well, in which case it is as a mountebank he catches votes and not as a meliorist." This, of course, is the case with Shaw himself. The world is "a den of dangerous animals among whom our few accidental supermen, our Shakespeares, Goethes, Shelleys and their like, must live as precariously as lion tammers do, taking the humour of their situation, and the dignity of their superiority, as a set-off to the horror of the one and the loneliness of the other."

Englishmen, he says, lean sincerely to virtue's side as long as it costs them nothing either in money or in thought. But, although steam locomotion is possible without a nation of Stephensons, "national Christianity is impossible without a nation of Christs." Here Shaw is making the all-important point that real progress cannot come by externals of any kind but only as dependent on moralized men and women. Consequently, religion, the key to the position cannot

flourish if it is sought to express it in obsolete forms. "When religious and ethical formulae become so obsolete that no man of strong mind can believe them, they have also reached the point at which no man of high character will profess them ; and from that moment until they are formally disestablished, they stand at the door . . . to keep out every able man who is not a sophist or a liar. A nation which revises its parish councils once in three years, but will not revise its articles of religion once in three hundred, even when these articles avowedly began as a political compromise dictated by Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, is a nation that needs remaking."

Very urgent from the sociologist's point of view is the problem of eugenics. "We must eliminate the Yahoo, or his vote will wreck the commonwealth," and to this end selective breeding is necessary.

#### 1902

On January 5, 1902, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* received its first production—by the Stage Society, at the theatre of the New Lyric Club.

In *The Daily News* for August 30, 1902, Shaw had a contribution in which is the following important passage :

Were the Indian authorities to propose to make education in India unsectarian by simply having an hour of "Koran teaching," the whole Empire would recognize the violently sectarian nature of such a proceeding. If, on the other hand, we banish the Bible, the Koran,

and the other sacred books of the Empire from the schools, we get what used to be called "secular education"; that is to say, instead of teaching that every child should be baptized, we teach that every child should be vaccinated; we replace creation in the garden of Eden by evolution from the amoeba; and we keep the field clear for the purely physical logic that finds its most striking political application in dynamite (or lyddite, if the logician wears a uniform), and its pet scientific method in vivisection. Religion is a subject that simply cannot be dropped. Nature especially abhors that vacuum.

In the same contribution he describes a phenomenon of great importance and common occurrence, the illusion founded on the common practice of comparing the *status quo*, not with the socially practicable alternatives to it, but with an individual's ideal.

In this year three of Shaw's plays were translated into German by Siegfried Trebitsch, who tried to get them put on at a theatre in Vienna which was under the Court. The Court announced that the traditional contracts were not to be altered. Shaw replied that Franz Josef might be Emperor of Austria-Hungary, but that in the theatre, he, Shaw, was Emperor of Europe, and that what he said, went. A contract was dispensed with. Shaw insisted that his plays must be acted without alteration, and wrote to Trebitsch:

If they know how plays should be written, let them write plays for themselves. If they don't, they had better leave the business to those who do. I won't

have the last scenes run into one. I won't have a line omitted or a comma altered. I am quite familiar with the fact that every fool who is connected with a theatre, from the call-boy to the manager, thinks he knows better than an author how to make a play popular and successful. Tell them, with my compliments, that I know all about that ; that I am forty-six years old ; that I know my business and theirs as well ; that I am quite independent of tantiemes [i.e., royalties] and do not care a snap of my fingers whether they produce my plays or not . . . they need not add stupidity and vandalism to Dichtersbeleidigung [i.e., high treason against a poet].

## 1903

When Shaw came, in 1903, to write the preface to *Man and Superman*, he put in it a passage which has justly become famous and which illustrates the legitimate identity of utterance of a character who expresses an author's own views and that of the author himself :

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one ; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap ; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

Here again Shaw reveals that his notion of the Life Force is that of one capable of using a man such as he to such high and holy ends. He insists that morality in the true spiritual sense is integral to real art.

1904: "FABIANISM AND THE FISCAL QUESTION,"  
"THE COMMON SENSE OF MUNICIPAL TRADING,"  
"JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND"

In *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question* Shaw argues that it may be necessary to have tariffs in order to protect a standard of living ; in *The Common Sense of Municipal Trading* that businesses must be watched with a view to ascertaining whether it will be profitable for the municipality to take them over. When the latter was published, Shaw sent a copy to Wicksteed inscribed, "To my father in economics."

On an early appearance by Lillah McCarthy on the stage ten years before, Shaw had advised her to go acting in the provinces for ten years to learn. Now, at the end of the ten years, she presented herself to Shaw. When she entered the room, she says, "he looked at me, gave me a broad smile, and said: 'Why, here's Ann Whitefield.' " Presently he wrote to her, "In a year from this you will be so famous that you won't look at my poor little plays and matinées ; so I may as well make the most of you whilst you are still attainable."<sup>1</sup>

In 1904 the late Mr. J. E. Vedrenne and Mr. Granville Barker began their management of the Royal Court Theatre, making artistic aims their first consideration. They adopted the repertory system. They introduced to theatre-goers Professor Gilbert Murray's translations of Euripides. They gave a memorable series of original productions of comedies

<sup>1</sup> *Myself and My Friends*, pp. 55-57.

by Shaw, who had never had a fair chance in the theatre before. Galsworthy was inspired by the work of Shaw to write for this enterprise his first play, *The Silver Box*. They also produced plays by St. John Hankin, Elizabeth Robbins, Masefield, Granville Barker.

The first of Shaw's plays written for Vedrenne and Barker's production was *John Bull's Other Island*.

On September 4, 1904, Shaw wrote to Ellen Terry, "I have finished a big play and a little one. . . . *How He Lied To Her Husband* (pathos at which you cannot help screaming laughing) and *John Bull's Other Island*. . . . I had to work against time to get the thing finished, especially as I had to stop in the middle to write *How He Lied* for Daly, who wanted a curtain raiser for *The Man of Destiny*."

#### " HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND "

This is delightful one-act comedy. A young man has fallen in love with a married woman and has written poems to her and the poems have got into the hands of the husband. The young man undertakes to lie to the husband and does so, only to find that his protested lack of admiration for the lady rouses to fury the husband, who is so proud of his wife that he delights in men falling in love with her. There is comedy in an attempted fight. On the lover's angry recantation and avowal of admiration for the lady, the denouement is happily achieved. Comedy is provided also by cross purposes among all three, and

by amusing references to *Candida*, which the young poet had taken to his heart.

#### “ JOHN BULL’S OTHER ISLAND ”

Mr. W. B. Yeats had asked Shaw to write a play for the Irish Literary Theatre, and this is what came of it ; but it was not a success from the point of view of the Irish Literary Theatre. The manuscript is in the possession of Dr. Cockerell, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, who very kindly allowed me to see it. Like Shaw’s manuscripts in general, it is written in small notebooks, some six inches by four, and written, with the short edge of the page vertical, on the right-hand pages. On left-hand pages there are drawings of the setting of the stage from time to time. In the original writing there was a Scotch doctor, Douie, a character in the play.

The play gives a picture *in parvo* of Ireland, with representative types, and satirizes the Gladstonian Liberal who does not let his left hand know what his right is doing : it satirizes “ the Englishman, so clever in his foolishness, and the Irishman, so foolish in his cleverness.” The play is remarkable as revealing the two selves in Shaw—the efficient Irishman, in the character of Laurence Doyle, and the mystic, in the form of an ex-priest, Keegan. The latter reveals the *true* Shaw as poet, mystic, artist, humanitarian. When asked what his notion of heaven is, he replies :

In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people : three in one and one

in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman.

Keegan also reveals that this world is a hard one and its hardness is due to the fact that the sufferings in it have been brought upon the souls in it through their sins in former existences.

The character Broadbent was modelled on a number of Liberal politicians, with a few traits taken from A. B. Walkley, and was suggested to Shaw by Cromwell's saying, observed by Shaw to apply to the English, that no man goes further than he who does not know where he is going.

The effect of the play was to attract the cultured and exclusive class of English society and to reveal Shaw, once and for all, to the intelligent public. The political world was captivated: Mr. Balfour, who was Prime Minister, went four times to see it: alone on his first visit, he was so delighted that he afterwards invited Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and, later, Mr. Asquith, to accompany him. Finally, the King commanded a special performance.

1905

On April 12, 1905, Shaw delivered a lecture on Shakespeare in Kensington Town Hall. In giving a résumé of the lecture he said:

In manner and art nobody can write better than Shakespeare because, carelessness apart, he did the thing as well as it can be done within the limits of human faculty.

This did not prevent his saying, *re As You Like It*, that he never wrote anything half so bad as *As You Like It* as regards *matter*.

#### “ MAJOR BARBARA ”

Mr. Charles McEvoy told Shaw that his father, who fought on the side of the Confederacy in the American Civil War, at the end of the war, although he was a most gentle and human man—grey-haired, benign—established a factory for the manufacture of torpedoes and various high-power explosives.

In 1905 Shaw wrote *Major Barbara*. The main theme is the Butlerian doctrine that the first thing in life is to make sure of the economic factor: be as moral as you can, but make sure first of the economic factor. This is emphasized by contrasting the Salvation Army's work with the social amelioration produced as a result of the manufacture of armaments. Religion is insisted on as of central importance, but it consists in the right use of power. The paradox is used, naturally, to bring out powerful criticisms of conventions as contrasted with spiritual veracities. People, for example, should not be allowed to make social atonement by gifts to charities of money made by exploiting the weaknesses of people.

The character of Cusins is a remarkably close

literary portrait of Professor Gilbert Murray and Lady Britomart was modelled on his mother-in-law, the late Countess of Carlisle. Major Barbara was founded on Eleanor Robson.

The impression made on W. T. Stead by the production of the play was expressed by him as follows: "Since I saw the Passion Play at Oberammergau, I have not seen any play which represented so vividly the pathos of Gethsemane, the tragedy of Calvary."

In *Major Barbara* Shaw completed a series of studies of professions in conflict with conventional opinion —*Cashel Byron's Profession*; *Widowers' Houses*, which might be called *Mr. Sartorius' Profession*; *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; and *Major Barbara*, which might be called *Andrew Undershaft's Profession*.

It is worthy of note that it was not until about 1905 that Shaw could have lived on his royalties from the production of his plays in London.

In a letter to Henderson on September 5, 1905, Shaw wrote:

The truth is that I am rather an impostor as a pundit on the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. . . . Nietzsche's notions of art, his admiration of the Romans, etc., are very unlike any views of mine; and his erudition I believe to be all nonsense: I think he was academic in the sense of having a great deal of secondhand book learning about him, and don't care for him except when he is perfectly original. . . . I have read one book and one play by Strindberg.

**1906: PREFACES TO " JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND " AND " MAJOR BARBARA " ; " THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA "**

In his preface to *John Bull's Other Island* Shaw argues for Home Rule on general principles. In particular, he prophesies that in Ireland it would bring about emancipation from tyranny from the Catholic Church. He again agitates for reforms in the army, and makes opportunity to expose what he regards as a miscarriage of justice in Egypt.

In the preface to *Major Barbara* Shaw developed it still further from being a more or less *bona fide* introduction to the play in hand into the development of ideas which serve dramatic purposes in the play but now become the themes of essays. Here it is due to a sympathetic revolt against anyone's lacking the means for a decent minimum standard of life: it is a concentration on the desirability of the abolition of poverty. He sees in the fact that everybody wants money the hope of economic salvation for society—not something to be deplored or glozed over with pretences of other and higher motives. There is a very remarkable passage in which he offers what may well be the classical reconciliation of the desires of the individual with what is desirable for society. He argues that people who are really developed are not content with having for themselves nice food, clothing, houses, or food for their families: they have "enormous social appetites." They are not content with handsome houses: they want handsome cities. They complain because the

charwoman is badly dressed, because the laundress smells of gin, because every man they meet is not a friend and every woman a romance. They turn up their noses at their neighbours' drains, are made ill by the bad architecture around them, the bad furniture, the bad art. They require in their neighbours justice, honour, a noble moral atmosphere. Thus material means are to be in the service of religion. Christianity has religion in it, but mixed up with very undesirable elements. Non-resistance will not suffice ; kindness must not lead to unkindness : people who are too much trouble to society should be put to death as painlessly as possible. Religion will not come into repute until creeds became intellectually honest. Shaw is vividly aware how the words of a man who is believed in can be treated as gospel although they may have expressed only a tendentious thought.

It was in this preface that Shaw made the courageous reference to Samuel Butler which was largely the means of bringing about the more general appreciation of that author.

#### 1906: "THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA"

One day in the summer of 1906 Mr. Granville Barker told Mrs. Shaw about a friend of his, a Dr. W—, who had recently been treated for tuberculosis at a London hospital. Mrs. Shaw was struck by the story, which prompted the consideration of the vast pains taken by hospital experts to preserve the lives of people who, unlike Dr. W—, were apparently

useless or worse. Ought not such people to be put to death by painless means? Whereupon Mrs. Shaw exclaimed, "There's a play in that!" Shaw replied, "I believe you are right. Hand me my tablet and I will go to work on it at once." Shaw has told that when he sat down to write he had only a vague idea in his mind, with a notion that he was going to say something amusing about serum therapy. Shaw has made it pretty plain that an original in real life for the part of an amoral man of talent immediately jumped to him from his memory. According to Lillah McCarthy, the genius's wife and he were to be the central interest of the play and it was to have been called *Jennifer*, but doctors came to greater prominence in it than Shaw had originally intended.<sup>1</sup> As the play worked itself out, Shaw introduced things which had occurred in real life. One day he had been in a hospital, visiting Sir Almroth Wright. For a particular treatment there was only a limited number of beds available. An assistant came in and reported that another application had been lodged. "Is he worth it?" asked Wright. Sir Almroth Wright was the original of Ridgeon. The play also gave Shaw an opportunity to take up a challenge of Archer. Archer had declared that Shaw was incapable of tragedy, because he had never dramatized a death. Shaw claimed that he put the fatal situation in the correct position—at the end of the fourth of five acts. For this he adapted from Wagner's *An End in Paris* the

<sup>1</sup> *Myself and My Friends*, p. 78.

idea of a musician's death-bed creed—"I believe in Mozart and Beethoven."

*The Doctor's Dilemma* exposes doctors, deals with the problem whether a clever, amoral artist or a hard-working general practitioner should be saved, and decides in favour of the latter. It also deals with a woman who goes on believing in her husband in spite of everything amoral proved about him.

In a letter written in 1906 Shaw clearly foresees "ribbon development" as a consequence of motor transport.

#### 1907: MR. DAN RIDER'S "ADVENTURES WITH SHAW"

Mr. Dan Rider, in his *Adventures with Bernard Shaw*, has told us how, in 1907, as bookseller or rather book-buyer, he called at 29 Fitzroy Square, as a friend had told him that Mrs. Shaw, senior, wanted to dispose of some books. She was in the midst of a removal. She proved to be exceedingly attractive, and referred him to her daughter, who, she said, was "superintending the earthquake." Miss Shaw also proved to be brimfull of humour and vitality. There were no books, but Mr. Rider bore away sacks full of papers. They turned out to comprise Shaw's press cuttings, his private diary for a year, and the larger part of the manuscript of *Love Among the Artists*. Mr. Rider found Miss Shaw's new address and posted the diary to her. Shaw's biographer, having got in touch with Mr. Rider, wanted to reproduce in his book the first and

last pages of the manuscript of *Love Among the Artists*. Rider felt that he ought to ask for Shaw's permission and wrote him, giving "a full and faithful account" of the way in which he had come into possession of his papers and asking for permission for Henderson to reproduce the pages of the manuscript. A week later he received from Shaw a postcard with the following: "Are you a bookseller by day and a burglar by night? If not, who is the burglar?" Once again Mr. Rider wrote to Shaw, telling him that he had his parcel of newspaper cuttings: if he would call when he was passing, he was very welcome to them: or if he was too busy to call and would make an appointment he (Mr. Rider) would bring them along to him. He got no reply.

At the end of 1907, the Vedrenne-Barker company moved from the Court Theatre to the Savoy. Of the 988 performances given during the Vedrenne-Barker season, 701 were of Shaw's plays, of which eleven were staged, several of them for the first time. They played to a profit. When a Euripides play drew small houses, they made up by playing *You Never Can Tell*. But in the long run they overreached themselves, and Shaw and Granville Barker had to come to the financial rescue.

1908

In an edition of *The Sanity of Art* published in 1908, Shaw wrote:

All the drugs, from tea to morphia, and all the drams, from beer to brandy, dull the edge of self-criticism and make a man content with something less than the best work of which he is soberly capable. He thinks his work better when he is really only more easily satisfied with himself. . . . To the creative artist stimulants are especially dangerous.

#### " GETTING MARRIED "

In this year Shaw wrote *Getting Married*. In form it is a reply to the challenge that a play cannot consist of one long conversation. The conversation is about marriage, contrived as to characters and "plots" to bring out various points of view. Mr. Collins is rather a repetition of William in *You Never Can Tell*. The original of the Bishop was Mandell Creighton.

In this play there is a very remarkable passage in which Shaw's use of "the supernatural" comes in. A woman falls into a trance and there is speech by inspiration. She makes an utterance in which it is as if she spoke for the whole race of women one of Shaw's poetic speeches:

When you loved me, I gave you the whole sun and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in a single moment, strength of the mountains in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your soul. A moment only; but was it not enough? Were you not paid then for all the rest of your struggle on earth? Must I mend your clothes and sweep your floors as well? Was it not enough? I paid the price without bargaining: I bore the children without flinching: was that a reason for heaping fresh burdens

upon me? I carried the child in my arms: must I carry the father too? When I opened the gates of paradise, were you blind? was it nothing to you? When all the stars sang in your ears and all the winds swept you into the heart of heaven, were you deaf? were you dull? was I no more to you than a bone to a dog? Was it not enough? We spent eternity together; and you ask me for a little lifetime more. We possessed all the universe together; and you ask me to give you my scanty wages as well. I have given you the greatest of all things; and you ask me to give you little things. I gave you your own soul: you ask me for my body as a plaything. Was it not enough? Was it not enough?

In this wonderful speech, Shaw is again revealed as the feminist in the best sense: he points out the treble burden that can be put upon women of the lover, the wife and the mother. In his lyrical passages the influence of the English Bible can be heard.

In the same section of this play, the woman, in her inspired state, gives utterance to words which—may the occasion be long delayed!—ought to be Shaw's epitaph:

I've been myself. I've not been afraid of myself. And at last I have escaped from myself and am become a voice for them that are afraid to speak, and a cry for the hearts that break in silence.

Once again in this play Shaw's ultimate morality is mystical: there are some things a gentleman cannot do, and there are things that a gentleman must do.

1909

In the beginning of 1909, the late Mr. W. H. Mallock

was engaged in a newspaper controversy, maintaining that ability was entitled to what it could get for its services. On February 2 Shaw wrote a letter to *The Times* which is remarkable for its vigour and moral healthiness and became famous. He says that this is not a political question between Socialism and Individualism, but a moral question. Is a fireman, before saving a child, to bargain for its nightie? What would Mr. Mallock's school or university say to his doctrine?

#### “PRESS CUTTINGS”

At this time the militant movement for women's suffrage was in being and Shaw wrote *Press Cuttings*. It satirizes the use of military force against moral force with riotous humour. Mitchener was modelled on the late Duke of Cambridge. The moral of the play is spoken by the orderly, “ You take my tip, Mr. Balsquith. Give the women the vote and give the army civil rights; and 'ave done with it.” Shaw has a prophetic gift. In another part of the play it is said, “ Could any other living man have persuaded the British nation to accept universal compulsory service as he did last year?” The apparently wild fantasies of the military being in control, of conscription in England, of votes being granted to women and civil rights being granted to women—within a few years they were actualities, and granted by Mr. Balsquith.

The play was prohibited by the Censor.

“ THE SHEWING-UP OF BLANCO POSNET ”

In 1909 Shaw wrote *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, the theme of which is that a tough in the Wild West is suddenly asked to hold a baby, which puts its arms round his neck. This acts as a catalyser on the mind of the tough and he turns his back on his lawless ways. In the play it is demonstrated that there is only one game to play and that is the clean game. *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet* is, as Shaw said, a religious tract. It was prohibited from being acted on the ground that the way in which the tough spoke of the deity was improper. There can be little doubt that, here again, public opinion has come to the point of view of Shaw and against the decision of the censorship, which was later rescinded.

Shaw's “ prefaces ” to these plays just described, on doctors, marriage, the censorship of plays are really not prefaces but treatises on social problems with which the plays are connected. He perceived that people bought his plays for their interest and amusement and, having bought them, would be likely to be induced to read the “ prefaces ” and thus to read what he wanted them to read. Shaw's essays on social problems proceed from profound reading and thought. On the problems of marriage, for example, Shaw is alive to those constituted by what goes on *within* marriage, by the over-attachment of

children to parents. The following is a passage of sympathetic eloquence of a noble kind:

We shall continue to maintain the White Slave Trade and protect its exploiters by, on the one hand, tolerating the white slave as the necessary breakwater of marriage; and, on the other, trampling on her and degrading her until she has nothing to hope from our courts; and so, with policemen at every corner, and law triumphant all over Europe, she will still be smuggled and cattle-driven from one end of the civilized world to the other, cheated, beaten, bullied, and hunted into the streets to disgusting overwork, without daring to utter the cry for help that brings, not rescue, but exposure and infamy, yet revenging herself terribly in the end by scattering blindness and sterility, pain and disfigurement, insanity and death among us with the certainty that we are much too pious and genteel to allow such things to be mentioned with a view to saving either her or ourselves from them.

Marriage ought not to be based merely on sex attraction: the most successful marriages are those "in which the decisive considerations have had nothing to do with sex, such as liking, money, congeniality of tastes, similarity of habits, suitability of class."

Shaw also saw that one of the chief obstacles to improvement is *orthodox* Christianity. This

is the penalty we pay for having borrowed our religion from the East, instead of building up a religion of our own out of our Western inspiration and Western sentiment. The result is that we all believe that our religion is on its last legs, whereas the truth is that it is not yet born, though the age walks visibly pregnant with it.

But these treatises suffer from Shaw's chief defect, his idealization of the average man and woman.

1910

In 1910 Shaw had a newspaper controversy with Ernest Newman over Richard Strauss. He took this very seriously, regarding the issues at stake as most important. Of *Elektra* he wrote:

In this music-drama Strauss has done for us just what he has done for his own countrymen: he has said for us, with an utterly satisfying force, what all the noblest powers of life are clamouring to have said, in protest against and defiance of the omnipresent villainies of our civilization; and this is the highest achievement of the highest art.

#### “THE DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS”

The occasion of Shaw's writing this play was an appeal on behalf of the scheme to establish a national, endowed theatre: the form of Shaw's effort was an appeal from Shakespeare. A drama with Shakespeare in it called for the dark lady of the sonnets. In the sonnets we read of Shakespeare using notebooks, and we know that authors have regularly done so, writing down experiences that strike them and may come in for composition. Think, then, of some scenes in Shakespeare's plays that may have been based on real life: think of some of the memorable utterances in the plays that may have come from things he heard. Some of these come together in one imagined experience.

It has been fashionable in dramatic circles to treat this play (and other Shaw plays) as artificial, witty, satirical, in the manner of Oscar Wilde. This play (and all other Shaw plays) should be acted in straightforward sincerity, allowing of course for humour and wit as in real life.

In

“ MISALLIANCE ”

Shaw displays his virtuosity in keeping abreast of the modern world, including the young men and women of the most advanced type, and understanding their “ case.”

1911

In 1911 Shaw gave an address to the Cambridge Heretics in which he expressed views on religion with frankness. Incidentally he made such good points as that “ firmness and obstinacy mean the same thing, only people use the one word when they want to be complimentary and the other when they want to be abusive.” “ The ordinary men or women, even in the politest society, were not happy.” He reiterated his view that Christianity in its historic form was inadequate to our Western needs and that it was requisite to work out a new form of religion.

In 1911 Lillah McCarthy wanted to have a season as actor-manager and asked Shaw to write a play for her. He straightway wrote

“ FANNY’S FIRST PLAY ”

Shaw again displays his virtuosity in keeping abreast

of the modern world, including the young man and woman of the most advanced type, and understanding their case.

Shaw had become disgusted with the dramatic critics. "The London critics," he said, "laughed heartily at my play *Misalliance*, yet the next morning they informed the public they had suffered the weariest agonies of boredom—simply because that is the customary thing to write about such plays." He pilloried them in *Fanny's First Play*, Walkley being represented by Trotter, Baugham by Vaughan, and Cannan by Gunn.

*Fanny's First Play* ran for two years and a half—600 performances.

#### PREFACE TO "THREE PLAYS BY BRIEUX"

In 1911 Shaw's preface to *Three Plays by Brieux*, translated by Mrs. Shaw and St. John Hankin, was published. It is evident that Shaw regarded Brieux as in some sense his "opposite number" and the preface contains passages that without doubt are applicable to Shaw himself. He speaks of

that kind of comedy which is so true to life that we have to call it tragi-comedy, and which is not only an entertainment but a history and a criticism of contemporary morals. . . . In his simplest mood, when he is only seeking to amuse, he does not manufacture a plot: he tells a story. He finds no difficulty in setting people on the stage to talk and act in an amusing, exciting or touching way. His characters have adventures and ideas which are interesting in themselves and need not be fitted into

the Chinese puzzle of a plot. . . . It is the business of Brieux to pick out the significant incidents from the chaos of daily happenings and arrange them so that their relation to one another becomes significant, thus changing us from bewildered spectators of a monstrous confusion to men intelligently conscious of the world and its destinies.

Hence these plays are

plays that have no endings. . . . The curtain comes down when the audience has seen enough of the life presented to it to draw the moral, and must either leave the theatre or miss its last train. . . . You come away with a very disquieting sense that you are involved in the affair, and must find a way out for yourself and everybody else if civilization is to be tolerable to your sense of honour. . . . The reason why Shakespeare and Molière are always well spoken of and recommended to the young is that their quarrel is really with God for not making man better. Brieux's fisticuffs are not aimed heavenwards: they fall on human noses for the good of human souls.

Shaw writes scornfully of the people who cannot appreciate contemporaries:

the people who love what has been already done in art and loathe the real life out of which living art must continually grow afresh. . . . The French critics who take it for granted that no contemporary of theirs could possibly be greater than Beaumarchais are really too modest. . . . The most pitiful sort of ignorance is ignorance of the few great men who are men of our own time. Most of us die without having heard of those contemporaries of ours for our opportunities of seeing and applauding whom posterity will envy us. Imagine

meeting the ghost of an Elizabethan cockney in heaven and, on asking him eagerly what Shakespeare was like, being told that the cockney had never heard of Shakespeare, or knew of him vaguely as an objectionable writer of plays full of regrettable errors of taste.

1912

Early in 1912 Shaw wrote a new preface, for the "Home Rule" edition to *John Bull's Other Island*. In it he says:

the future is not the empires, but to federations of self-governing nations. . . . I demand of every nation right of ingress and egress, roads, police, an efficient post office, and, in reason, freedom of conscience. . . . But, although there will no doubt be abuses in Ireland under Home Rule which do not exist under English rule . . . when all is said, it is so certain that in the long run all civilized nations must at the same time become more dependent one on another and do their governing work themselves, that if Ireland refused Home Rule now, it would sooner or later be forced on her by England because England will need all her time and political energy for her own affairs when once she realizes that the day for letting them slide and muddling through is past.

#### "ANDROCLES AND THE LION"

Shaw was impressed by the militant suffragette movement, how it was like a religious one and how conventional people supported Christianity, which in its early days must have been to the conventional citizens of the Roman Empire as the suffragettes were to the general public in 1912. Wishing to show up

in a play in this way the real nature of religion, he found that an early Christian subject that appealed to him as a humanitarian was the story of Androcles and the lion, and with characteristic boldness he undertook to put the lion on the stage, thus producing what he fitly called "a religious pantomime." The method of treatment of the play is again the "contemporaneous" one, as in *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Shaw again insists on the mystical view of religion. The heroine is asked what she is prepared to die for and replies, "I don't know. If it were anything small enough to know, it would be too small to die for. I think I'm going to die for God. Nothing else is real enough to die for." When she is asked, "What is God?" she replies, "When we know that, captain, we shall be gods ourselves."

The scene in which Lavinia describes the effect on her of the approach of death was based on an experience in Shaw's own life.

(*Androcles and the Lion* was produced on September 1, 1913.)

In

•      "OVERRULED"

Shaw has a valuable piece of sex psychology. One of the characters points out that convention, which favours the idea of a woman being a woman and nothing more, objects to the man who, when alone with a woman, is "horrid" and says, "What is a man to do? She can't talk interestingly; and if he talks that way himself, she doesn't understand him. . . .

Before the end of the first five minutes, they are both hideously bored. There's only one thing that can save the situation; and that's what you call being horrid." This recalls Meredith's doctrine in his essay on comedy, that full comedy cannot exist except on the basis of sex equality.

#### " PYGMALION "

We have seen from a letter that Shaw wrote to Ellen Terry in 1897 that he had been struck with the idea of writing a play in which Mrs. Patrick Campbell should be "an East End dona in an apron and three orange and red ostrich feathers," and Forbes Robertson should be a West End gentleman. As we have previously seen, Shaw early became interested in phonetics and observed how much turns in English society upon speaking "standard English." He saw that, provided one was suitably dressed and spoke "correctly," nothing more was required for admission to Society. He wrote a play round the idea of a professor of phonetics, for a wager, training a cockney flower girl according to this scheme and having her presented in Society. In his preface to *Blanco Posnet* on the censorship, Shaw quoted Sir W. S. Gilbert's evidence before the committee on the censorship—"In a novel one may read that 'Eliza stripped off her dressing gown and stepped into her bath,' without any harm; but I think if that were presented on the stage it would be shocking." In his new play Shaw took occasion to demonstrate that the censorship did not

prevent a vivid presentation of this theme, and to make the point clear, the girl in the play was called Eliza. The real drama comes in the plight of the girl who has been removed from her familiar environment without being assimilated into the new one. Shaw's sympathetic insight comes out here strongly again, as does his perception of how blind, how lacking in sympathetic insight people can be—e.g., men in relation to the case of this girl. But incidentally, Shaw satirizes the standards in all classes of society. Perhaps the most striking passage in the play is that in which the life of the “highbrow” is upheld against the other:

If you can't stand the coldness of my sort of life, and the strain of it, go back to the gutter. Work till you are more a brute than a human being; and then cuddle and squabble and drink till you fall asleep. Oh, it's a fine life, the life of the gutter. It's real: it's warm; it's violent: you can feel it through the thickest skin: you can taste and smell it without training or any work. Not like Science and Literature and Classical Music and Philosophy and Art.”

#### PROPOSAL OF THE FOUR-POWER PACT

In 1912 Shaw suddenly entered into foreign politics with a proposal which he “urged vainly upon our English Foreign Office and on the German Ambassador, of a combination of Britain, France, Germany, and America, to impose peace on Europe.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter quoted in the catalogue of Henderson's Shaviana, p. 42.

On March 21, 1912, Shaw gave a lecture at the New Reform Club on "Modern Religion." This is perhaps the most explicit statement of his views on religion. He repeats his view of its mystical nature. He also makes explicit the doctrine of God in the making: but, as we have pointed out, he does not explain how the highly good intuitions could have come unless there was highly good being for them to come from.

1913: SHAW'S WARNING AGAINST WAR: "THE CASE FOR EQUALITY"

In *The Daily Chronicle* for March 18, 1913, appeared an article by Shaw entitled "Armaments and Conscription: A Triple Alliance against War":

Our first step . . . should be to propose to France and Germany a triple alliance, the terms being that if France attack Germany, we combine with Germany to crush France, and if Germany attack France, we combine with France to crush Germany. Germany doubts whether France would come into this alliance in her present temper; but I really do not see how she could help it if Germany consented, because we should conclude a dual alliance if we could not have a triple one, in which case France would be in the position that whereas she could not attack Germany without fighting us at the same time, Germany could attack her without our interference. The alliance should guarantee, further, that if any other power were to attack either France or Germany, the three would line up together against that Power. From that starting-point we might enlarge the combination by accessions from Holland and the Scandinavian kingdoms

and finally achieve the next step in civilization, the policing of Europe against war and the barbarians. . . .

If we cannot have an effective army for all purposes, we may as well shut up shop as far as foreign policy is concerned until we make an end of war; and that we can only do by being prepared to make war on war. . . .

As a Socialist I am very strongly in favour of compulsory service. All income tax returns and insurance cards should in future have a column for chest measurement and age; and all able-bodied persons should be obliged to give the country thirty-five years' service, of which a few would be devoted to military training.

In 1913 Shaw published *The Case for Equality*. He advocated that economic reforms should aim at establishing equality of real income and argued benefits that would accrue as against the defects of the present condition of things: it is the indispensable basis for voluntary obedience, for marriage not limited by class barriers, for real good manners.

In 1913 the German managers, in despair at having to produce Shaw's plays after they had been reported from London as unpleasant failures, stipulated that in future the first performances should take place in Germany. Accordingly, *Pygmalion* reached the theatre in Berlin before its production by Tree at His Majesty's Theatre, and since then it has been Shaw's practice to give priority to foreign theatres whenever possible, the exception being Malvern.<sup>1</sup>

In *The Play Pictorial* Forbes Robertson number in 1913 Shaw had an article in which he described the

<sup>1</sup>*Barry Jackson and the London Theatre*, by G. W. Bishop, p. 111.

transition that took place in drama from the older idea of the hero to the new:

The demand now is for heroes in whom we can recognize our own humanity, and who, instead of walking, talking, eating, drinking, sleeping, making love, and fighting single combats in a monotonous ecstasy of continuous heroism, are heroic in the true human fashion: that is, touching the summits only at rare moments, and finding the proper level of all occasions, condescending with humour and good sense to the prosaic ones, as well as rising to the noble ones, instead of ridiculously persisting in rising to them all on the principle that a hero must always soar, in season and out of season.

1914: FURTHER WARNING AGAINST WAR ; "PARENTS AND CHILDREN"; APPEAL FOR BELGIUM; "COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR"

In *The Daily News* for January 1, 1914, appeared an article by Shaw entitled "The Peace of Europe and How to Attain It," in which he wrote:

I have nothing but contempt for the imbecility of the people who are willing to throw away hundreds of millions yearly on their idlers and wasters, and yet grudge a negligible fraction of that sum for a battleship—who stare idly at the sale of a pound of London's flesh by a nobleman to a speculator, and yet feel deeply humiliated by the result of the Carpentier-Wells glove fight.

In this year he wrote his essay on education, called *Parents and Children* and supplied as a preface to *Misalliance*. He recognizes that children are born with proclivities both good and bad. The basis of education

must be truth. As between unprotectedness and coddling he is more strongly opposed to the latter. Freedom is essential as far as possible, but there must be some compulsory education. Compulsory education may be divided into (*a*) the teaching of the things necessary to enable a citizen to "know his way about" without being a nuisance and (*b*) education in civics, including religion, which education is necessarily controversial. The only thing to be safeguarded in the latter case is that, as far as possible, all views are fairly presented to the children. Beyond these necessary minima, all education should be voluntary. This should offer the opportunity for what is called a liberal education, and the community must provide the material and conditions for it.

Under the heading of education that ought to be compulsory he does not include games. He desires to keep compulsion to the minimum because education ideally must follow *interest*, and that means that education must be art. "You cannot listen to a lesson or a sermon unless the teacher or the preacher is an artist."

In 1914 was published a volume on *Killing for Sport*, edited by Salt for the Humanitarian League, and Shaw wrote a preface for it, in which he says:

The true objection to sport is the one taken by that wise and justly famous Puritan who objected to bear baiting not because it gave pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. He rightly saw that it was not important that we should be men of pleasure,

and that it was enormously important that we should be men of honour. . . . What is not disputable by any person who has ever seen sport of this character is that the man who enjoys it is degraded by it.

On November 7 appeared in *The Nation* an "Open Letter to the President of the United States of America" by Shaw. As a consequence, the Belgians, through their spokesman, Count Lalang, asked Shaw to write their own direct appeal to the world, with the United States especially in view. Shaw drafted an eloquent "Open Letter to President Wilson." "In it are found the principal arguments set forth a week later in *Common Sense About the War*. In essence it was a non-partisan document, calling on President Wilson 'to invite the neutral powers to confer with the United States of America for the purpose of requesting Britain, France, and Germany to withdraw from the soil of Belgium and fight out their quarrel on their own territories.' It is noteworthy, and not possibly coincidental, that Shaw in many of his public pronouncements anticipated Wilson on many points of policy. The assertion is made in full recognition of the fact that Wilson took no public notice of Shaw's open letter, and, so far as is known, never referred to Shaw or gave any hint—save broadly between the lines of his speeches—of Shaw's influence. Historians, it is confidently believed, will some day recognize the pronounced influence upon Wilson of Shaw's views on many matters vital in Wilson's policies: the Fourteen Points, the League of Nations, Freedom of

the Seas, direct dealing with the German people, and the Treaty of Versailles.”<sup>1</sup>

“ COMMON SENSE ABOUT THE WAR ”

In 1914 Shaw published *Common Sense About the War* as a supplement to *The New Statesman*. He made a mistake in the quibble of identifying Grey as a Junker, but, in spite of some such mistakes, he wrote, thus early in the war, things that reveal a detachment of the good kind and a prescience such as surely cannot be equalled. As in the case of the Boer War, whereas he might have been expected to come out as a “pro-enemy,” he came out on the side of the Allies, while deprecating strongly what he pointed out as mistaken attitudes to the Germans. He speaks of “our tradition (nonetheless moving because it is so hard to reconcile with the diplomatic facts) that England is a guardian of the world’s liberty.” “I am standing on the proud fact that England is the only country in Europe, not excepting even France, in which Kropotkin has been allowed to live as a free man, and had his birthday celebrated by public meetings all over the country, and his articles welcomed in the leading review.” “It is not enough for the Allies to win: we and not Russia must be the decisive factor in the victory, or Germany will not be fairly beaten. . . . We must have the best army in Europe.” He urges reforms in the army which are now obvious and were, under the stress of war, carried into effect

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 635.

soon after he wrote of them, but were very far from being obvious to the powers that were at the time. The official weekly allowance for the child of a soldier was 1s. 6d., being less than a third of the standard allowance for an illegitimate child under an affiliation order, and for the widow of a soldier the pension was 7s. 6d. per week. He wrote: "I have in my hand as I write a copy of *The Torquay Times* containing a hospitable invitation to soldiers' wives to call at the War Office, Whitehall, S.W., if they 'desire assistance or explanation of their case.'"

Of the Kaiser the estimate Shaw gives would appear to be the correct one, according to the evidence that has subsequently become available. Of Bernhardi and the German militarists he wrote that it was an utter mistake to think of them as Supermen—"these common crimes of violence and raid and lust that any drunken blackguard can commit and that no mere multiplication can dignify." Nowadays it is indeed strange that the following was called for, but it is due to Shaw to remember that it was called for—a plea that we should not think that "the composer of *Parsifal* was a Militarist Prussian (he was an exiled revolutionist); that Nietzsche was a disciple of Wagner (Nietzsche preferred the music of Bizet, a Frenchman); and that the Kaiser was a disciple of Nietzsche, who would have laughed his childish pietism to scorn."

"This war will stop," he says, "when Germany throws up the sponge, which will happen long before she is utterly exhausted, but not before we ourselves

shall be glad enough of a rest. Nations are like bees: they cannot kill except at the cost of their own lives." "We cannot go on fighting for ever, or even for very long, whatever Lord Kitchener may think." At the conference that must take place after the war, neither England nor Germany must claim any moral superiority. Shaw anticipated the reparations problem, strongly advocating that none should be taken. The consequence of reparations after the 1870 war, he says, was that Berlin went headlong into a colossal financial smash, whilst the French peasant who had provided the capital from his old stocking, threw soberly on the interest at the expense of less vital classes." "Liège and Lille and Antwerp and the rest must be paid their money back with interest; and there will be a big builder's bill at Rheims. But we should ourselves refrain strictly from blackmail. We should sell neither our blood nor our mercy."

In perhaps the most important passage of the essay he wrote: "Finally we come to the only body of opinion in which there is any hope for civilization: the opinion of the people who are bent . . . on the problem of how to so redraw the map of Europe and reform its political constitutions that this abominable crime and atrocious nuisance, a European war, shall not easily occur again." The new map must be settled with the consent of the people concerned.

For example, "One of the broken treaties of Europe which has been mentioned less frequently of late than

the Belgian treaty is the treaty of Prague, by which a plebiscite was to have been taken on the subject of the nationality of Schleswig and Holstein. That plebiscite has never been taken. It may have to be taken, with other plebiscites, before this war is settled."

Germany itself will not disintegrate. "No doubt the Germans may reasonably say to the Prussian drill sergeant and his master Hohenzollern, 'A nice mess you have made of your job after all we have endured for you because we believed you could make us invincible. We thought that if you were hard masters you were at any rate good grenadiers; but here are these piffling little Belgians, and these Russians who were beaten by the Japanese, and these English who made such a poor show against a handful of Boer farmers, fighting and organizing just as well as you do. So, as the French and English are organized as a republic and an extremely limited monarchy, we will try how that sort of constitution will suit us.'" He thinks it probable that the monarchies of Germany and of Austria will be got rid of by their own peoples.

It will not do "if on the morrow of the peace we may all begin to plot and plan one another's destruction over again in the secrecy of our Foreign Offices." The international congress which will be held after the war will certainly ask that if we shake the mailed fist at all, we shall shake it publicly. Indeed they will probably demur to its being done even by the representatives of the nation until the occasion has been submitted to the judgment of the representatives of

the world or such beginnings of a world representative body as may be possible.

The main business of the settlement "must be the establishment of a Hegemony of Peace, as desired by all who are really capable of high civilization, and formulated by me in the daily press in a vain attempt to avert this mischief whilst it was brewing. Nobody took the smallest notice of me; so I made a lady in a play say 'Not bloody likely,' and instantly became famous beyond the Kaiser, beyond the Tsar, beyond Sir Edward Grey."

The solution of the problem of Russia is essential. He asserts that after 1906 our newspapers, after having been critical of the Tsarist régime, acquiesced in it. "It was in 1906 that we began to lend Russia money, and Russia began to advertise in *The Times*. Since then she has been welcome to flog and hang her H. G. Wellses and Lloyd Georges by the dozen without a word of remonstrance from our plutocratic Press." "When French money went to Russia, the French papers discovered that the Russians were a most interesting people and their Government—properly understood—a surprisingly Liberal Government." Shaw is not an internationalist in capital.

"If Russia undertook to govern democratically, she would not be able to redeem her promise: she would do better with primitive Communism." "Until Russia becomes a federation of several democratic States and the Tsar is either promoted to the honourable position of hereditary President or

else totally abolished, the eastern boundary of the League of Peace must be the eastern boundary of Swedish, German, and Italian civilization."

He predicts the return of Alsace and Lorraine to France. "And if the war should further result in the political reconstruction of the German Empire as a democratic commonwealth, and the conquest by the English people of democratic control of English foreign policy, the combination would be immensely eased and strengthened, besides being brought into harmony with American public feeling, which is important to the security and prestige of the League."

Large units, Shaw argues, make dangerous autocracies, but as groups of federated autocracies they are the best neighbours in the world: "a federal democratic Russia would be as safe a colleague as America: a federal democratic Germany would be as pleasant company as Switzerland."

The settlement of the war ought to be

the substitution for our present militarist kingdoms of a system of democratic units delimited by community of language, religion, and habit; grouped in federations of United States when their extent makes them politically unwieldy; and held against war by the bond of international Socialism, the only bond upon which the identity of interest between all workers never becomes obscured.

"We might all very well make a beginning by pledging ourselves as America has done to The Hague tribunal not to take up arms in any cause that

has been less than a year under arbitration, and to treat any Western Power refusing this pledge as an unpopular and suspicious member of the European club."

"The one danger before us that nothing can avert but a general raising of human character through the deliberate cultivation and endowment of democratic virtue without consideration of property or class, is the danger created by inventing weapons capable of destroying civilization faster than we produce men who can be trusted to use them wisely. . . . It is therefore undeniably possible that a diabolical rhythm may be set up in which civilization will rise periodically to the point at which explosives powerful enough to destroy it are discovered, and will then be shattered and thrown back to a fresh start with a few starving and ruined survivors."

Disarmament, he holds, is all nonsense: nobody is going to disarm after this experience. Disarmament is an illusion. People think it is the gun that matters. "They are wrong: the gun matters very much when war breaks out; but what makes both war and the gun is the man behind them. And if that man really means the peace of the world to be kept, he will take care to have a gun to keep it with. The League of Peace must have a first-rate armament or the League of War will very soon make mincemeat of it. The notion that the men of evil intent are to have all the weapons will not work." Peace can be established "only by a combination of armed and fanatical pacifists of all nations, not by a crowd of

non-combatants wielding deprecations, remonstrances, and Christmas cards."

Peace must be based on the morality of mankind, and Shaw speaks of the "idiotic ignoring of the highest energies of the human soul, without the strenuous pressure of which the fabric of civilization—German civilization perhaps most of all—could not hold together for a single day."

With regard to religion in relation to the war, Shaw holds that those who professed Christianity as pacifist and, on the outbreak of war, as militarist, ought to have acknowledged their conversion. Of their failure to have done this he writes :

I venture to affirm that the sense of scandal given by this is far deeper and more general than the Church thinks, especially among the working classes, who are apt either to take religion seriously or else to repudiate it and criticize it closely. When a bishop at the first shot abandons the worship of Christ and rallies his flock round the temple of Mars, he may be acting patriotically, necessarily, manfully, rightly: but that does not justify him in pretending that there was no change, and that Christ is, in effect, Mars.

The unveracity of the Churches produces atheism of the wrong kind:

There is the youthful atheism with which every able modern mind begins: an atheism that clears the soul of superstitions and terrors and servilities and base compliances and hypocrisies, and lets in the light of heaven. And there is the atheism of despair and pessimism: the sullen cry with which so many of us at this moment, looking on blinded, deafened, maimed wrecks that were

once able-bodied admirable lovable men, and on priests blessing war, and newspapers and statesmen and exempt old men hounding young men on to it, and saying "I know now that there is no God." . . . The vast ecclesiastical organizations have never yet been able to utter the truth, because they have had to speak to the poor according to their ignorance and credulity, and to the rich according to their power.

The Press too had been greatly to blame. It is scarcely too much to say that these great human calamities, such as the Great War, are "the revenge of the sweated journalist on a society so silly that though it will not allow a man to stuff its teeth without ascertained qualifications for the task, it allows anyone, no matter how poor, how ignorant, how untrained, how imbecile, to stuff its brains without even taking the trouble to ask his name."

Another great cause of trouble in this country is the party system. Shaw describes it as "the most abominable engine for the perversion and final destruction of all political conscience ever devised by man."

But the fundamental danger is that

higher education, culture, foreign travel, knowledge of the world: in short, the qualification for comprehension of foreign affairs and intelligent voting, is confined to one small class, leaving the masses in poverty, narrowness and ignorance, and being itself artificially cut off at their expense from the salutary pressure of the common burden which alone keeps men unspoilt and sane.

He urges the need of a permanent organization in this country to deal with the unemployed. "The problem was worked out by one of the hardest bits of thinking yet done in the Socialist movement, and set forth in the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress, 1909."

The effect of *Common Sense About the War* on even intelligent students of Shaw may perhaps be best gauged from the able Mr. John Palmer's little book, *Bernard Shaw: An Epitaph*.

The Germans used *Common Sense About the War* as propaganda. This they did among the Moors with success. A. E. W. Mason, the well-known novelist, and an old friend of Shaw's, and actor in the original cast of *Arms and the Man*, was in the Mediterranean branch of the British secret service, and called upon Shaw, now regarded by the Moors, on German authority, as a "great prophet," to counteract this bad effect of his work. Shaw and Mason collaborated in an "Epistle to the Moors," based on the New Testament, the Koran, and Burton's translation of the *Arabian Nights*. It was effective.

In *The New Statesman* for December 19, 1914, Shaw had a letter in which he gives expression to an important observation of the antagonism that utterances of his evoke:

I find that most of the writers who differ with me are perfectly reckless of the effect of their statements on the war provided only they can damage me for my insufferable airs of intellectual superiority.

1915

In 1915, on January 23, in *The New Statesman* appeared an article by Shaw on "Chestertonism and the War."

I will content myself with explaining to Mr. Cecil Chesterton why it is that the extreme horror of physical cruelty which he cites as evidence of the materialism of Shelley and his disciples (of whom I profess myself one) is in fact the mark of the spiritual man everywhere. Physical torture is the one means by which the lowest humanity can degrade and torture the highest. It is the foul blow in the glorious warfare of souls for salvation. The continual effort of the saint is to make himself incapable of it; and if the sinner takes advantage of this to make himself continually more proficient in the arts of coercion, the world will go straight to the devil.

While physical torture is the one means by which the lowest humanity can degrade and torture the highest, the one taste that atheists have in common with saints is a taste for profane jokes: "it is your hopelessly irreligious churchgoer who is shocked at hearing 'sacred things spoken lightly of.' "

#### ESSAY ON CHRISTIANITY

In 1915 Shaw wrote an essay on Christianity, published as a preface to *Androcles and the Lion*. He singles out as doctrines distinctive of Jesus—the principle of communism, the admitted obligation to deal with crime without revenge or punishment, and a full assumption by humanity of divine responsibilities; and these, he says, are turning out to be good

sense and sound economics. He elaborates thus—that Jesus “preaches conduct incessantly. He advocates communism, the widening of the private family with its cramping ties into the great family of mankind under the fatherhood of God, the abandonment of revenge and punishment, the counteracting of evil by good instead of by hostile evil, and an organic conception of society in which you are not an independent individual but a member of your society, your neighbour being another member, and each of you members one of another, as two fingers on one hand, the obvious conclusion being that unless you love your neighbour as yourself and he reciprocates, you will both be the worse for it.” When we engage on a purely scientific study of economics, criminology and biology, says Shaw, we find that our practical conclusions are practically those of Jesus.

“If we urge a rich man to sell all he has and give to the poor, he will inform us that such an operation is impossible. If he sells his shares and his lands, their purchasers will continue all those activities which oppress the poor. If all the rich men take the advice simultaneously, the shares will fall to zero and the lands be unsaleable. If one man sells out and throws his money into the slums, the only result will be to add himself and his dependents to the list of the poor, and to do no good beyond giving a chance few of them a drunken spree. . . . The rich man must sell up not only himself but his whole class; and that can be done only through the Chancellor of the

Exchequer." Jesus recommended that we should "set our minds free for higher uses. In other words, that we should all be gentlemen and take care of our country because our country takes care of us," instead of doing everything for money. Jesus perceived that nobody could live the higher life unless money and sex love were obtainable without sacrificing it.

In publishing *Androcles and the Lion*, in 1915, Shaw added a note at the end in which he again protested fiercely against the conduct of the churches in this country during the war. The world, he finds, is very much where it was in the early days of Christianity.

#### "O'FLAHERTY, V.C."

In 1915 Shaw was called upon to write a recruiting play for Ireland. As had happened time and again, the response was very different from the expected. But it is possibly the most humorous one-act play extant—*O'Flaherty, V.C.*—and there is deep matter in it too. In this play Shaw has scope for characterization in terms of Irish conditions he knew as a native.

#### "THE INCA OF PERUSALEM"

In 1915, in *The Inca of Perusalem*, Shaw, in doing justice to the Kaiser, used him also as the typical ruler to drive home his criticism of men as they are:

For years I gave them art, literature, science, prosperity, that they might live more abundantly, and they despised them. Now I give them death in its frightfullest

forms, they are devoted to me. Ask those who for years have begged our taxpayers in vain for a few paltry thousands to spend on life.

“HEARTBREAK HOUSE: A FANTASIA ON ENGLISH  
THEMES IN THE RUSSIAN MANNER”

was written between 1913 and 1916. When Shaw began this study of “cultured leisured Europe before the war,” not a shot had been fired. The production of a number of Tchekhov’s plays in London gave Shaw’s mind the tilt to *Heartbreak House*. Lady Simpson, i.e., Miss Lena Ashwell, told me that Shaw and she were guests at the same house and she mentioned that her father had been a sea captain who became a clergyman. Shaw got her to talk about her father, and when the play was published sent her a copy with the message that she would recognize the source of Captain Shotover. Needless to say, the character was only derived from the germinal idea and is not a portrait.

*Heartbreak House* is “a weird play.” It has a deep symbolism in it. Heartbreak House is a symbol of the world revealed in the tragedy of the war. Even the good are as if they had shot their bolt and were poseurs. But characters in the play reveal their deeper natures: two women are speaking and one says to the other, “You see me getting a smasher right in the face that kills a whole part of my life: the best part that can never come again; and you think you can help me over it by a little coaxing and kissing.

When I want all the strength I can get to lean on: something iron, something stony, I don't care how cruel it is, you go all mushy and want to slobber over me." The other woman in her reply reveals that she too—"when I am neither coaxing and kissing nor laughing, I am just wondering how much longer I can stand living in this cruel, damnable world." In this play again Shaw insists that one ought to be *independent*; only when one is independent has one power: not happiness but blessedness is the acme of life:

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. I tell you happiness is no good. You can be happy when you are only half alive. I am happier now I am half dead than ever I was in my prime. But there is no blessing on my happiness.

ELLIE (her face lighting up). Life with a blessing! that is what I want. . . . There is a blessing on my broken heart. There is a blessing on your beauty, Hesione. There is a blessing on your father's spirit.

Shaw's prophetic spirit had a boding of calamity: "muddling through" would not serve any longer:

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. The captain is in his bunk, drinking bottled ditch-water; and the crew is gambling in the forecastle. She will strike and sink and split. Do you think the laws of God will be suspended in favour of England because you were born in it? . . . Navigation. Learn it and live; or leave it and be damned.

Once again Shaw points out that, as religion is central, unveracity in the church chokes inspiration for the people:

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. The church is on the rocks,

breaking up. I told them it would unless it headed for God's open sea.

What is perhaps the best comment on the play appeared in a notice of it in *The New Leader*:

Perhaps it is just a queer criss-cross of life itself, the pattern always eluding us although sometimes we may get momentary glimpses of it. Most probably, like music and all great art, its meaning is within itself. How, after all, can a symphony be "explained" save in its own terms? . . . *Heartbreak House* is so shot with a strange, wild beauty that the two lovely lines of Shelley in the play seemed in perfect company.<sup>1</sup>

In 1916 Lady Gregory dedicated her *The Golden Apple* "To George Bernard Shaw: The Gentlest of My Friends."

#### 1917

During the war, distinguished journalists were invited to visit the front, and early in 1917, the British Commander-in-Chief, then Sir Douglas Haig, invited Shaw. His reports were published in *The Daily Chronicle* from March 5. They gave a very authentic account of what he saw and what was to be seen—remarkably free from bias. Incidentally, a glimpse was given of a Shaw play which is not yet written: he told of whiling away the last stretch of a journey by inventing a play on the Rodin theme of the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Barry Jackson and the London Theatre*, by G. W. Bishop, p. 137.

Burgesses of Calais, which, like a play about the Rheims Virgin, he had never written.

I have been told that, on visiting a convalescents' camp in France, Shaw, with Sir Almroth Wright, spent an evening in discussion in the presence of the officers, and that their impression was that Shaw was the humblest man they had seen and the most like Christ. My informant was a clergyman.

#### “DOCTORS’ DELUSIONS”

Shaw wrote under this title a treatise which was published in *The English Review* from December, 1917 to March, 1918. It is a serious study of the important subject of the medical profession, and it may be doubted whether the popular title attracted more readers of the right kind than it repelled, because the work is a profound and valuable study such as ideally would be undertaken by an ideal statesman.

All trade union experience shows that the doors of a trade or profession must not be guarded, either for entrance or exit, by the members inside. Limitation of output to keep up prices, limitation of apprentices to keep up wages or fees, specialization of qualification to keep out candidates of certain social classes and religious sects, fossilization of the curriculum to keep out new methods, abortions of new discoveries to fit them to obsolete conditions, deliberate persecution of original, independent, or critical individuals, and all the tricks by which moribund institutions and harassed competitive breadwinners struggle for life, are anti-social; and it should not be in the power of any sectional body, much less one pecuniarily interested in them, to

enforce them by powers of expulsion and professional ruin. No man's livelihood and reputation, much less the progress of science, should be at the mercy of an irresponsible clique of autocrats.

As usual, Shaw has studied his subject so that he has amazing knowledge of it.

During the war, in a campaign to protect poor people from extortion, Mr. Dan Rider sold his Shaw MS. In the same cause, he wrote to Shaw asking permission to publish his Press cuttings and giving his reasons. This time a reply came from Shaw's secretary that if Mr. Shaw wanted to republish any of his writings he was capable of doing that himself. He was quite in agreement with Mr. Rider's campaign, but considered the people should pay for it themselves. If Mr. Rider was fool enough not to make them pay, they would only thank him by saying that he was making a good thing out of it. Mr. Shaw would like to have a list of the cuttings referred to. To this Mr. Rider replied that he could not send a list as the cuttings were in pawn. He received no reply.

## 1918

In *The Eton Review*, No. 1, March, 1918, was an article by Shaw in which the following passages occur:

The great aim in life is not to find out how little you *need* do, but how much you *can* do. Liberty is the

right to think and choose for oneself. What liberty costs is the trouble of thinking and choosing for oneself. He who thinks liberty worth the trouble, and actually likes the trouble, is the only really free Englishman.

An eye for colour is womanly; and all wise men take trouble to acquire the strong points of women, just as wise women take lessons from men.

In this year Shaw contributed a preface to *The W.E.A. Education Yearbook*, in which he makes some important points.

Anyone may practise abortion and poisoning on the nation's mind and spirit as a journalist or newspaper proprietor with complete immunity and even huge profit.

Shaw brings out that no more than its due value should be given to

that power of working sixteen hours a day every day for thirty years which at present enables the stupidest routineers to oust from important posts men of much higher faculty, whose real work cannot be sustained, except in emergencies, for more than two or three hours, and even at that imposes extensive periods of total recreation.

Shaw again advocates controversial education. He points out that in such education as that of popular movements, owing to its embodying controversy, a man or woman can get education of a quality superior to that of the academic:

It is not ignorance shaming education: it is controversial education shaming dogmatic cramming.

Suppose a Minister of Education proposed to adopt Natural Selection or "neo-Darwinism" as the creed of

the Empire, with Weismann as its prophet! Instantly he would provoke a raging opposition that would bring any Government to the ground. Calvinist and Catholic would alike declare that they would fight to the last drop of their blood to save their children from the lake of fire and brimstone. The Creative Evolutionists, with Butler and Bergson for their prophets, would offer to swallow the Bible ten times over sooner than the doctrine with which Darwin "banished mind from the universe" and hope from the soul of man. In vain would the Minister of Education exclaim, "My good people: what are you making all this fuss about? Don't you know that the scientific sides of our schools and universities have been teaching nothing else but Natural Selection and purely mechanical Tyndallic-Lucretian physics for the last half century, and that it would be harder for a teacher who taught anything else to hold a professorship than for Mr. Edward Clodd to hold the pulpit of the City Temple or the Deanery of Westminster?"

To teach science without any reference to philosophy and religion is to present the world to the child as an automatic machine.

The question of freedom of will, says Shaw, is bound to arise, and in turn the problem of evil. These involve the presentation of differing opinions—controversial education. What sense is there, he asks, in pretending that in our education thought is free when

you are thrusting on the scholar little text books reeking with the crudest theories of creation, destination, and predestination, and claiming an authority for the rites of Jenner and Pasteur that St. John the Baptist himself would have regarded as blasphemous?

It is due to Butler to remember that he, many years before this, pointed out that science had, without its being generally noticed, come to take the place of dogmatic religion.

The student had better be warned that he must not hope to be able to dodge his moral responsibilities by any nonsense about Agnosticism: the world cannot be run on evasion and paralysis; and where knowledge stops, intuitions and dogmas must come to the rescue. England cannot expect every man to do his duty until she makes up her mind as to what his duty is; and she will find when it comes to the point that his duty consists to a great extent of doing what everybody else does, and not what he thinks right; for it is necessary in managing the human traffic called society to insist that under certain common circumstances everybody shall do the same thing and thus create confident expectation.

In this education, various methods are to be used and learnt :

Is a man who does not know the uses of perversity, of paradox, of derision, an educated man?

Shaw states his conclusion on education as follows :

We are driven to conclude, then, that technical elementary and civic education must be compulsory, but that the latter must be controversial, whilst liberal education must be voluntary, though the community must provide the material and conditions for it.

In the controversial education dealt with in the above essay, Shaw included religion as essential: orthodox religion must be taught and the views of those who differ from it must be taught. Shaw's

eminence appears in his insisting on the teaching of orthodoxy in respect of things in which he differs from it strongly. How far he differs from it again appears in a letter which was published in 1918 in Frank Harris's *Life of Wilde*:

It is in the nature of people to worship those who have been made to suffer horribly: indeed, I have often said that if the Crucifixion could be proved a myth, and Jesus convicted of dying in old age in comfortable circumstances, Christianity would lose ninety-nine per cent. of its devotees.

During the General Election in 1918, in *The Daily Chronicle* appeared an article by Shaw in which he argued for a "capital levy," this being the phrase officially adopted by the Labour Party; but Shaw deprecated the way in which the policy of a "capital levy" was put. He pointed out that it was impossible to make a levy on capital spent: what could and ought to be done was to make as large appropriations out of income as possible, to pay off the national debt; and he argued for this passionately as an approach to equality of sacrifice:

The other remedy is to take all the unemployed and organize their labour productively; so that they may become a source of income to the country instead of an expense to it.

1919

On April 7 and 8, 1919, in *The Daily Herald* appeared two instalments of an article by Shaw entitled,

“Repudiating the National Debt.” He advocated industrial conscription, and argued that if this were applied universally, the home creditors would themselves repudiate their own debt.

In June, 1919, in *The British Music Society Bulletin* was an article by Shaw with the significant title, “Starved Arts Mean Low Pleasures.”

In June, 1919, Shaw completed his preface to *Heartbreak House*. In it is the following significant passage:

Only through the accident of being a hereditary peer can anyone in these days of Votes for Everybody get into parliament if handicapped by a serious modern cultural equipment.

Speaking of the idle rich, he wrote:

Even those who lived within their incomes were really kept going by their solicitors and agents, being unable to manage an estate or run a business without continual prompting from those who have to learn how to do such things or starve.

As showing the effect of the war he registers the fact that during the British occupation of Cologne every German had to salute every British officer he met, but, he comments, “That is what war makes of men and women. It will wear off.”

#### “PEACE CONFERENCE HINTS”

In this year Shaw published *Peace Conference Hints*. There is no doubt that the arrogance suggested by the word “hints” in the title is typical of a good deal in

Shaw that has provoked antagonism. The same thing operated in *Common Sense About the War*, for example. But surely it is a confession of failure on the part of the public that it could be prevented by such a thing from learning the most valuable things that Shaw had to say. His prescience is again amazing:

The next war, if permitted to occur, will be no "sport of kings," no game of chance played with live soldiers and won by changing them into dead ones, but a scientific attempt to destroy cities and kill civilians. Not the soldiers alone, but all of us, will have to live miserably in holes in the ground.

The divisions in the internal affairs of Europe, reflected as they are in the United States, will tax Mr. Wilson's diplomacy to the limit, and may possibly drive him to the point at which he may have to act as master of the situation rather than as negotiator and conciliator.

If he fails, Europe will either settle down in despair to drudge along until the next war is ready to engulf it, or else throw official and democratic parliaments and conferences to the winds, and try Syndicalism, Bolshevism, Spartacus dictatorship, and even intentional chaos and anarchy in order that they may work out their natural remedy through what bloodshed and destruction may be necessary, sooner than trust any longer to established institutions that can do nothing but prepare for holocausts of which each as it approaches, threatens to be the doom of civilization.

A very remarkable example of Mr. Shaw's prescience is that he foresaw that, at least for some purposes, it is premature to try to incorporate Eastern countries in a world state:

The obvious truth is that the practicability and success

of the League of Nations depend on limitation to a carefully selected group of politically and psychologically homogeneous constituents. . . . The materials for a League of which the British Empire and the United States are to be constituents are to be found between the Carpathians and the Rocky Mountains, and not further afield. . . . Human political society is in solution; and it will not crystallise into one solid lump for a long time yet. . . . Superfluous strength would be dearly purchased at the cost of a great increase of friction.

The experience of the League of Nations in connexion with China and Japan has given support to this view.

Another point on which Shaw has held unexpected views is disarmament. In the essay before us he says:

The demand for security, which will be more imperative than ever, will take the form of a demand for disarmament. Now not one of the Great Powers will consent to be genuinely disarmed. . . . A deadlock may be averted by the fact that the nations, though afraid to disarm, are still more afraid to face the next war.

One reason for believing that war will not be welcomed is that the Great War has cost so much that practically all have been seriously impoverished by it:

That the national outputs of the belligerents have never been better distributed than during the war; that millions of labourers and their families have been better fed and clothed than ever in their lives before; that nevertheless colossal profits have been made by some employers, does not console the governing class for the reduction of its permanent incomes by more than one-third through income tax and supertax and for a fifty per cent. reduction in the purchasing power of the two-thirds that remain.

## Nevertheless

The League must have a police force at its disposal. . . . I purposely omit such widely advocated and little thought-out "sanctions" as the outlawry and economic boycott of a recalcitrant nation. They are double edged weapons, or rather spears pointed at both ends. We do not outlaw the individual offender: we either leave him to his conscience or call a policeman. We cannot outlaw him without outlawing ourselves at the same time in respect of him. And we cannot refuse a customer without losing his custom.

Another piece of advice that Shaw gave in advance, thoroughly unacceptable at the time, but come to be seen to have been wise, is the following:

As far as the planning of the war and the preparations for it are concerned, the parties enter the Peace Conference on equal terms morally. All of them obeyed, more or less intelligently, the instinct of self-preservation, and were under the necessity of securing it by military force because there was no supernational law in existence to take its place.

Shaw's prescience is illustrated by this further quotation:

The influence of party politics and Balance of Power diplomacy on the Peace Conference may produce a reactionary combination of the present European war Governments with the American Republican Opposition against the American Democratic Government and the European Oppositions, and Mr. Wilson, as a Great Man standing for a Great Idea, must depend on sheer intellectual and moral superiority without regard to election figures.

Shaw also dealt again with the "Levy on Capital," pointing out that what it really amounted to was that

though founded on the absurd delusion that the figures of the War Loans and Liberty Loans are anything now but memoranda of claims for interest payable out of future production, it may nevertheless have the effect of confiscating that interest and forcing property holders to mortgage their estates and their industrial stocks and shares to the Government for nothing.

Shaw also foresaw the world depression resulting from the war:

Every German we have killed, and every German child we have lamed for life by rickets, is a loss to us just as certainly as every Allied soldier or civilian the Germans have killed is a loss to Germany. "There is no wealth but life," said Ruskin truly; and we shall all, Germans and Allies alike, be on short commons for years to come, because we have killed and disabled so much of the life of the world. . . . Add nine millions of deaths from war pestilence, which is only faintly alleviated by calling it Spanish Influenza; pile on the uncertainty as to whether even the victors can avert the revolutions which are not practically *de rigueur* in the case of defeat; and it will be seen that Bloch, the Polish banker, whom the war was at first supposed to have signally refuted, has in fact been confirmed by it in his essential thesis that modern war has passed from the stage of wholesale murder to that of State suicide.

In this essay, Shaw repeated his assertion of the failure of democracy:

The people can no more govern than they can write

plays or use the infinitesimal calculus. Even government by consent of the governed is impossible as long as people are so uneducated politically that they will not consent to be governed at all, and must therefore be governed, under one pretence or another, by main force. But government for the people is possible, and is the goal of democracy.

In the last analysis, Shaw in this essay, is as usual a mystic:

President Wilson will need that rare and mystical force of character that acts "on the evidence of things unseen" in the face of a very depressing mass of contrary evidence of things very glaringly visible. . . . No man can be great and popular at the same time before his death except at a distance. . . . There is only one force that can conquer; and that force is the entirely mystic force of evolution applied through the sort of living engine we call the man of principle. Principle is the motive power in the engine: its working qualities are integrity and energy, conviction, and courage, with reason and lucidity to show them the way . . . the force in the presence of which evil loses heart and goodwill takes it.

The man of principle is necessary because place and power are divided between the hereditary aristocrat (that is to say the aristocrat who is not necessarily an aristocrat at all) and the ambitious demagogue who has energy and histrionic instinct without exceptional intellect or exceptional character, and who is so dependent on electoral applause that when he gives way to a generous impulse and says something really splendid, he runs away from it at the first hoot of the nearest cad. . . . The extremely easy operation of putting the clock back recommends itself to a huge proportion of the

people and of the governing classes as more feasible as well as more congenial than the very arduous operation of keeping it up to time.

So as to the League of Nations, "Nothing but conscience and common sense can keep it together in any case."

In *The Daily News* for November 15, 1919, appeared an article by Shaw entitled "The Economics of Bedlam." It was a vigorous criticism of current advocacy of a "capital levy." As we have already seen, Shaw advocated a capital levy of a sort, but with characteristic candour he exposed the impossibilities of a capital levy as currently advocated. The apparent contradiction of at the same time advocating a capital levy and opposing it is a good example of how Shaw's ability and integrity have perplexed the public. I was lecturing on Shaw at the time, and my students were completely bewildered and brought to me newspaper cuttings with an article by Shaw which apparently contradicted my exposition of his views.

The so-called realization of capital is obviously practicable only to the amount of the spare food available out of the current harvest. Before the war this was estimated at four hundred millions every year, no less than half of which was driven abroad by the continuous tendency of Capitalism to drive capital out of the country in spite of the efforts of Socialism to retain it. There is nothing more than that four hundred millions to be got in any year by a tax on capital.

Shaw points out that thus three per cent. of the capital value could be gathered, but if this were exceeded,

all the capitalists would be driven into the money market simultaneously trying to "realize," whilst the purchasers of incomes would not be increased, either in numbers or resources; the current rate of interest would go up with a bound; the values of stocks would fall with a crash; there would be a panic in which businesses would be overthrown.

Shaw goes on to say that the operation aimed at "is far too difficult and dangerous to be left to men who would not understand and would not intend what they were doing." The death duties, for example, "are now avowedly a method of abolishing inheritance; and they are a cruel and clumsy method." "But if you are lazy and disingenuous, and prefer to go on merely taxing, remember that there is nothing but income to tax, and that if you try to get more, you will be landed in a frightful mess."

### 1920

In an interview published in the *New York Evening Post* of March 13, 1920, Shaw, taking as an example the fact that "all through the war, the further away people were from the firing line, the more bloodthirsty they were," went on to make the remark, which is surely profound:

I suppose there's something about actual experience that knocks a lot of nonsense out of people.

He attacks America for intolerance as being worse than Europe. Shaw told his interviewer that once he was asked to give a lecture on the condition that he would not talk on politics or religion or say anything that would hurt people's feelings, and that he replied that politics and religion were the only things he was interested in, that he always talked about them, and that he always hurt somebody's feelings. He went on to declare himself to be with those who hold that women are more practical than men: they may often do a thing badly, but they get it done. Then he told the interviewer how, during the war, a Zeppelin dropped three bombs in his immediate vicinity:

"I was reading one night when I heard the warning signals. First the maroons—'Boom! Boom! Boom!' Twenty minutes later came heavier reports—the anti-aircraft guns. I was horribly frightened. Every sensible person went down into underground shelters. But I am also exceedingly lazy, and I soon argued myself into thinking that I was as safe there as anywhere. Then came a hideous crash. A bomb had dropped right out there—" He pointed out to Cleopatra's Needle, no more than a hundred yards away. "It chipped the base of it. A second bomb fell about the same distance away, on to the Little Theatre. Then to complete the triangle with me in the centre, a third bomb ripped things open across the court from the Savoy Hotel, no further away than the Little Theatre or the Needle. Mrs. Patrick Campbell was staying at the Savoy at that time. She told me she was at her window when the bomb fell. Suddenly the whole front of the house at which she was looking was shorn away."

1921

In *The Nation* for February 19, 1921, appeared a review by Shaw of a book by Hyndman. Here is a good specimen of Shaw's humour:

Mr. Hyndman, who would as soon have thought of aiming at a resemblance to Samuel Smiles as to Jehovah, was born with exactly the right beard (at least, no living man has ever seen him without it), and has always resembled Blake's vision so imposingly that it is difficult to believe that he is not the original, and Blake's picture the copy. Nobody in the British Socialist movement has ever produced this effect or anything approaching it. Mr. Wells is so hopelessly dehirsute that his avowed longing to shave Marx may be the iconoclasm of envy. Mr. Sidney Webb's beard *à la Badinguet* is not in the running. My own beard is so like a tuft of blanched grass that pet animals have nibbled at it. William Morris's Olympian coronet of clustering hair, and his Düreresque beard, were such as no man less great could have carried without being denounced as an impostor; but he resembled the Jovian God in Raphael's Vision of Ezekiel, not the Jehovah of Blake. Mr. Hyndman alone, without effort, without affectation, without intention, turned his platform, which was often only a borrowed chair at the street corner, into a heavenly throne by sheer force of beard and feature. Even he himself could not ignore his beard, though he was the only man who could not see it. It compelled him to wear a frock coat when his natural and preferred vesture would have been a red shirt. He had to preach the class war in the insignia of the class he was fiercely denouncing. When in desperation he discarded his silk hat, the broad-brimmed soft hat that replaced it immediately became the hat of Wotan, and made him more godlike than ever.

But there are more serious things in this paper:

Private property, in its modern reduction to absurdity as Capitalism, is tottering to its fall, and we must make up our minds to be ready for the new Communist order or for a crash.

Hyndman's book, says Shaw, comes just when the hugest of the European Powers is putting its doctrine to an experimental test on an unprecedented scale:

the collapse of Capitalism, the expropriation of the expropriators, the accouchement of the old society pregnant with the new by *Sage Femme La Force*, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the obliteration of the *bourgeoisie* as a social order.

All that the Marxian historic moment means when analysed is the moment when the *bourgeoisie* loses its grip on industry and on the armed forces of the Government, and lets them slip into the hands of the leaders of the proletariat when these leaders are what Marx calls class-conscious. . . . There never has been any conversion of the majority of a people: all the changes have been imposed by energetic minorities.

#### “BACK TO METHUSELAH”

Shaw had for long enough seen that a fundamental question in life is, to put it in biological form, how “characters” come into being. He had come to see that the view represented by Butler is true: fundamentally, it is simply based on the fact that if one uses a muscle and keeps on using it, the muscle develops. If man wants to develop himself in a certain direction, if he can solve the problems in the way and keeps on trying, there is no saying but he may be able to develop

in the desired direction. In this sense, "imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire; you will what you imagine; and at last you create your will. . . . To desire, to imagine, to will, to create."

These words are taken from Shaw's play cycle, *Back to Methuselah*, in which the central symbol is the possibility of the desire to live longer on the earth being realized to an indefinite extent. There are some people who "never want to die, because they are always learning and always creating either things or wisdom, or at least dreaming of them." But the requisite intensity of *willing* is as rare as genius. "The men who would like to be millionaires won't save sixpence even with the chance of starvation staring them in the face. The men who want to live for ever won't cut off a glass of beer or a pipe of tobacco, though they believe the teetotallers and non-smokers live longer. That sort of liking is not willing."

Thought is a passion like any other passion except that it is a growing necessity of evolving life instead of, like sex passion, a receding one which already produces reactions of disgust and counter passions of chastity.

In the cycle Shaw depicts a myth of the Creation, contemporary life, and the future "as far as thought can reach." Some of it, particularly at the beginning and the end, is high poetry, but some of the contemporary part is journalism, although excellent and humorous journalism. As in previous plays, he introduces contemporaries in the thinnest of disguises.

In the preface, he quotes from Oken's *Nature Philosophy*, published in 1809, the latter's definition of natural science as "the science of the everlasting transmutations of the Holy Ghost in the world," and he comments, "The man who was scientific enough to see that the Holy Ghost is the most interesting of all the hard facts of life got easily in front of the block-heads who could only sin against it." This he elaborates as follows: "Evolution as a philosophy and physiology of the will is a mystical process, which can be apprehended only by a trained, apt, and comprehensive thinker."

(*Back to Methuselah* was published in 1922 and first produced in this country at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in the autumn of 1923.)

In 1921 on November 12 in *The Nation* appeared an article by Shaw in which he wrote:

It is not emotion in the raw, but emotion evolved and fixed as intellectual conviction that will save the world.

In a speech on November 30 in the same year he emphasized the necessity of compulsion in social reconstruction:

Any reconstruction whatever must involve more State compulsion of the individual than the present system . . . how to organize the equitable sharing among us of that irreducible minimum of exertion without which we must perish.

Shaw contributed to the collection of memoirs of Beerbohm Tree one which contains some notable passages:

His attitude towards a play was one of whole-hearted anxiety to solve the problem of how to make it please and interest the audience. Now this is the author's business, not the actor's. The function of the actor is to make the audience imagine for the moment that real things are happening to real people.

Shaw found Tree extremely unbusinesslike and characteristically offered copious advice. Tree was moved to remonstrance:

"I seem to have heard or read somewhere," he said, "that plays have been actually produced, and performances given in this theatre under its present management, before you came. According to you, that couldn't have happened. How do you account for it?"  
"I can't account for it," I replied.

On one occasion Tree's acting was so bad that Murray Carson passed Shaw a slip of paper on which he had written, "If you will rise and move a resolution, I will second it."

*Heartbreak House* had its original production at the Court Theatre in 1921. The critics, during the first interval, in the bar, had a joke which amused them very much. Returning to the theatre after the next scene had begun, they heard a speech from the stage which happened to fit in with something in the joke. From that moment they proved to be incapable of

listening properly to the play. I had this account from a very high critical authority, who said that this damned the production of the play for years.

All this in spite of the fact that Edward Shanks described *Heartbreak House* as "perhaps one of the greatest works of our generation," and A. G. Gardiner as "one of the most remarkable allegories of life ever put upon the stage." Sir Barry Jackson (whose production of the play revealed to Shaw the genius of Cedric Hardwicke) says that with his company *Heartbreak House* is not a play to be rehearsed but a sort of almost religious reunion in which the actors are not their professional selves but really the characters in the play.

### 1922

In *The Nation* for March 11, 1922, appeared a review by Shaw in which he has a wonderful phrase in a parenthesis—"the youthful sense of immortality commonly called exuberance."

In this year Shaw wrote a preface for a new edition of *The Perfect Wagnerite*. In it he points out that, in addition to the renaissance in drama in our time, unnoticed by most people, there has been also a renaissance in music: "Messrs. Bax, Ireland, Cyril Scott, Holst, Goossens, Vaughan Williams, Frank Bridge, Boughton, Holbrooke, Howells, and the rest (imagine being able to remember offhand so many names of British composers turning out serious music in native styles of their own!)." Had Wagner been

told that an Englishman (named Elgar) "would attain classic rank as a composer, he would hardly have kept his temper. Yet all this has happened very much as it happened in Shakespeare's time; and the English people at large are just as unconcerned about it, and indeed unconscious of it, as they were then."

1923

In *The Nation* for February 10, 1923, Shaw had a contribution on the medical profession.

Doctors no more dared tell us these things than a member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers durst have told us before the war that the skill for which he demanded and received double the wages of unskilled labour could be acquired in a week by any reasonably strong and hardy young woman.

Shaw again reveals remarkable technical knowledge.

In 1923 the present writer had an experience with Mr. Shaw which illustrates a hard streak in him which is hard to understand in a man who is so much otherwise. I was co-founder and first President of the Leicester Drama Society. In this capacity I had to encounter a good deal of hostility to Shaw in getting his plays put on. We could, of course, cast only such of his plays as we had players competent for. We cast *You Never Can Tell* and applied to Shaw for permission. We received a very courteous letter in which he explained that this was among plays of his whose acting rights he had disposed of on a contract and he kindly gave a list of his plays not so disposed

of. From this list we chose *Arms and the Man* and cast it, but when we applied to Shaw for permission, we received a curt letter saying that he *would* not grant permission. I wrote explaining how we were placed but got the following reply:

Mr. Bernard Shaw desires me to say that he is quite unmoved by the complaint, and that if the L.D.S. has no aims fresher than *You Never Can Tell* and *Arms and the Man*, and considers his later plays inferior to them, it need not be surprised if it finds its way blocked by his contracts with the Shaw touring companies.

#### 1924

In 1924, on February 1, appeared in *The New Leader* an article by Shaw in which he wrote:

As to credit, bankers think you can build factories with credit. But you cannot. Credit is only an opinion entertained by one man of another man's ability and willingness to repay a loan. The loan itself must be a loan of solid goods, or it will not build a factory or employ a single man in industry of any sort. The present bankruptcy of Europe has been produced by governments acting on the advice of Stock Exchange operators and bankers.

#### “ SAINT JOAN ”

Dr. Sydney Cockerell, Curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, an old friend of Shaw, was much struck on reading *Jeanne D'Arc*, by T. Douglas Murray, by the dramatic quality of the actual records of the trial, and passed on the hint to Shaw. In 1924

the latter published *Saint Joan*. It is another of his studies of the man—in this case, the woman—of genius but is set in a fuller context of history than any other of his plays. Historians bear testimony to the excellence of the historical work in the making of the play, and it is a tribute to Shaw that both Catholics and Protestants have been satisfied with how their respective “cases” have been dealt with in it. An important point is Shaw’s treatment of miracle in the life of Joan. A miracle he defines as “an event which creates faith.” So when Joan is told that when she heard the voices of saints in the sounds of the bells, it was only her imagination, she replies, “Of course, how else could messages come?” Shaw’s view evidently is that true intuitions are the most authentic experiences: what forms they are clothed in is of secondary importance. In the historic clash of conflicting beliefs the desirability of the true point of view is made to be felt: Saint Joan says, “I see now that the loneliness of God is his strength: what would he be if he listened to your jealous little counsels? . . . You are not fit that I should live among you.”

The epilogue was written to prevent readers or witnesses of the play from leaving it with easy consciences. It is intended that we should feel our moral responsibility to our contemporary representative or representatives of the type symbolized in Saint Joan. The epilogue contains a litany to the departed saint which surely is among the greatest passages of English prose:

The girls in the fields praise thee; for thou hast raised their eyes; and they see that there is nothing between them and heaven.

The dying soldiers praise thee, because thou art a shield of glory between them and the judgment.

The princes of the Church praise thee, because thou hast redeemed the faith their worldlinesses have dragged in the mire.

The cunning counsellors praise thee, because thou hast cut the knots in which they have tied their own souls.

The foolish old men on their deathbeds praise thee, because their sins against thee are turned into blessings.

The judges in the blindness and bondage of the law praise thee, because thou hast vindicated the vision and the freedom of the living soul.

The wicked out of hell praise thee, because thou hast shown them that the fire that is not quenched is a holy fire.

The tormentors and executioners praise thee, because thou hast shown that their hands are innocent of the death of the soul.

The unpretending praise thee, because thou hast taken upon thyself the heroic burdens that are too heavy for them.

But it is shown that we do not really *want* the man or woman of genius. When will the world be ready to receive the saints?

The best way, from the present writer's point of view, to answer the question whether the epilogue is necessary, how we treat the contemporary representative of the type symbolized in Saint Joan, is to see how Shaw himself has been and is treated. It is true that we do not roast this type physically, but metaphorically

we roast him. *Saint Joan* is of course, a revelation of Shaw's own experience.

The reason why *Saint Joan*, in spite of the epilogue, has been Shaw's most successful play with the public is that it is written on lines familiar—those of the chronicle play and that Shaw's view, in favour of Joan, is on the popular side. It is not, it may be hazarded, Shaw's best play, although indeed on a very high plane.

#### 1925 : "CRUDE CRIMINOLOGY"

In the course of the militant women's suffrage movement and during the war, in the case of conscientious objectors, men and women of education and high character were imprisoned in unusual conditions, and some of them afterwards devoted this experience to prison reform. A committee was formed to publish views, and Shaw, who had long been interested in the subject as a publicist and a humanitarian, was asked to write the preface to the report. As things turned out, it appeared as the preface to another book, the volume of the Webbs' history of local government dealing with prisons. The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States published it separately. It did not appear among Shaw's works till the collected edition of 1931. His preface to the essay was written in 1925.

<sup>1</sup> In Shaw's view, the person who criticizes our prisons as being too humane, would not do so if he realized that

the conditions were that he should never leave the prison, never speak, never sing, never laugh, never see a newspaper, and write only one sternly censored letter, and have one miserable interview at long intervals through the bars of a cage under the eye of a warder. . . . He is, at the expiration of his sentence, flung out of the prison into the streets to earn his living in a labour market where nobody will employ an ex-prisoner, betraying himself at every turn by his ignorance of the common news of the months or years he has passed without newspapers, lamed in speech, and terrified at the unaccustomed task of providing food and lodging for himself.

On the other hand, we cannot abandon punishment: our toleration is threatening our civilization.

The fact has also to be faced that there are so many more people outside prisons who are guilty of the same crimes as those who have got inside:

In scores of ways, from the habitual utterance of wounding speeches, and the contriving of sly injuries and humiliations for which they cannot be brought to book legally, to thrashing their wives and children, or, as bachelors, paying prostitutes of the hardier sort to submit to floggings, they seek the satisfaction of their desire wherever and however they can. . . . From the people who tell white lies about their ages, social positions, and incomes, to those who grind the faces of the poor, or marry whilst suffering from contagious disease, or buy valuable properties from inexperienced owners for a tenth of their value, or sell worthless shares for the whole of a widow's savings, or obtain vast sums on false pretences held forth by lying advertisements, to say nothing of bullying and beating in their homes, and drinking and debauching in their bachelorhood.

Shaw's conclusion is that

In the cases where the offender has fallen into bad habits and bad company, the stupidest course to take is to force him into the worst of all habits and the worst of all company: that is, prison habits and prison company.

Among the reforms that Shaw commends are to add to the present power of the detaining authorities to release the prisoner at any time if they consider him fit for self-responsibility, the power of the prisoner to remain if he finds himself more comfortable and safe under tutelage, as voluntary soldiers feel themselves more comfortable in the army, or enclosed nuns in a convent.

He, of course, follows up Butler's conception of crime as disease and of treating such criminals correspondingly "instead of turning on them like a herd of buffaloes and goring them to death."

In Shaw's judgment the best punishment is that of conscience: it answers to all the criteria:

It is retributive, because it makes him uncomfortable; it is deterrent, because detection and retribution are absolutely certain; and it is reformative, because reformation is the only way of escape.

Shaw registers the discovery that the "criminal type" is manufactured by prison. This, he claims, has been established by a book:

It is entitled *The Influence Which Our Surroundings Exert On Us*, and is the work of Sir William Arbuthnot Lane, one of our most distinguished surgeons. In it he shows that by keeping a man at work as a deal porter,

a coal trimmer, a shoemaker, or what not, you can, within a period no longer than that spent in prison by typical criminals, produce a typical deal porter, coal trimmer, and so on, the changes involved being visible grotesque skeletal changes for which Huxley or Owen would have demanded a whole evolutionary epoch.

But Shaw goes on to argue a still more surprising solution of the paradox that there is a criminal type and that the criminal type is common outside prisons:

Confinement, obedience, silence at associated work, continual supervision by hostile guardians reporting every infraction of rule for punishment, regulation of every moment of one's life from outside, compulsory exercise instead of play, systematic extirpation of initiative and responsibility, uncongenial and sometimes impossible tasks, and a normal assumption that every original and undictated action will be a wrong action. This is the lot of the well-brought-up child, whether heiress to a throne or heir to a country rectory, like Samuel Butler, who was beaten by his father until he acquired and retained until his death some of the stigmata of a chained dog. The British statesman, Mr. Winston Churchill, a duke's grandson, tells us in his reminiscences that when he was a child of seven he was sent to an expensive school where the discipline was more ferocious than would be permitted in a Reformatory for young criminals of twice that age.

The "criminals" outside the law and the "criminals" inside the law—and you can interpret outside and inside as you please—

all held that pugnacity, the will to conquer, and the sort of courage that makes the will to conquer effective, are

virtues so splendid that they sanctify plunder, devastation, and murder in direct proportion to the magnitude of these operations. The relaxations of the operators are love affairs and luxurious banquets. Now pray what else is the romance of the thieves' kitchen and of the surreptitious conversations of the prison exercise ring and associated labour shop? The difference is no more essential than that between whisky and champagne, between an ounce of shag and a box of Havanas, between a burglary and a bombardment, between a jemmy and a bayonet, between a chloroform pad and a gas shell, between a Browning pistol bought at a pawnbroker's and a service revolver.

Incidentally, Shaw says, as usual, weighty things:

The great obstacle to the Socialist dream of a perfectly organized and highly prosperous community, without poverty or overwork or idleness, is the intense repugnance of the average man to the degree of regulation of his life which it would involve. . . . If civilization is to be saved for the first time in history, it will have to be by a much greater extension of public regulation and organization than any community has hitherto been willing to submit to.

Is Shaw quite consistent in holding that all communities must live finally by their ethical values: that is, by their genuine virtues. Living virtuously is an art that can be learnt only by living in full responsibility for our own actions.

One of Shaw's many and excellent chivalries was his championing of the case of the late Dr. Axham, who had his name struck off the register because he gave

an anaesthetic to a patient of Sir Herbert Barker, who was not a registered medical practitioner—a case which, carried out to the very end, left a most unsatisfactory impression on public opinion and provides very good proof for the attitude Shaw has taken to the General Medical Council. In 1925 in a letter to *The Times* for October 23, Shaw wrote the following :

My own efforts to call attention to it result only in what I must call editorial imbecilities to the effect that I have “a down on the doctors,” and that every quack would have to be registered if Sir Herbert Barker were registered, which is about as sensible as saying that because Brahms was made a Doctor of Music without doing the curricular exercises in counterpoint the universities are bound to confer degrees on all our street piano men. As a matter of fact, few persons can have had more or better doctor friends than I; indeed, that is why my utterances have been so well informed; but they may not speak for themselves, whereas I, being free to open my mouth without being ruined and stigmatized as infamous, can act occasionally as the mouthpiece of a gagged profession.

In 1925 Shaw was invited by T. P. O'Connor to a dinner in honour of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. In his reply he said, “These meals would have come in more handily 50 years ago.” To the present writer it appears that this was called for. The public will not judge a man on his merits, they judge the cigars by the picture on the box. But when a man has “arrived,” they cumber him, as Johnson told the Earl of Chesterfield, with their help.

1926: SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY: LETTER FROM THE  
GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER

In 1926, on his seventieth birthday, Shaw received a letter from the German Foreign Minister by the hands of the German Ambassador in London. In his reply Shaw wrote that Germany was the cultural leader of Europe and proceeded:

If I were a German, I should be justifiably proud of this. As I am, if not an Englishman (as you know, I am an Irishman), at least a lifelong and faithful servant of the English people, I am sorry that it should be so. But it is so; and I am none the less grateful to Germany.

In a speech in celebration of the day, he said that he did not care a snap of his fingers for his literary eminence in comparison with his pioneering and constructive work as one of the founders and organizers of the Labour Party.

When Arnold Daly died, an American newspaper tried to get some expression from Shaw. The sardonic in Shaw took advantage of the fact that Daly had been intemperate and he cabled:

Impossible not to be interested in poor Daly's extraordinary death. Cases of spontaneous combustion are very rare.

1927

In 1927, in *The Sunday Express* for August 7, appeared a contribution by Shaw on vivisection, in which he states his position as follows:

We cling to it dishonourably because we are repeatedly assured that it has led to the discovery of cures for our diseases and we are prepared to snatch at any dirty receipt for immortality rather than face death like ladies and gentlemen. . . . They must not seek knowledge by criminal methods, just as they must not make money by criminal methods.

1928: "THE INTELLIGENT WOMAN'S GUIDE"

In 1928 Shaw published a substantial compilation of his sociological views under the title, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*. It is a frequent criticism of Shaw that he ought to set down his views in a straightforward manner, but his actual experience has proved that when he has done so, the public will not take the interest in his views that they do when he puts them in more challenging forms. The editor of *The New Statesman* was once criticized by a man on the ground that the paper was dull; "Why," said the critic, "don't you get Shaw to write for you? : look at that dull series of articles you have had on——" The editor replied, "Those articles were by Shaw." In the book before us we have a most laudable and painstaking effort by Shaw to put his views in a straightforward manner, but the fact is that the book is difficult to read, in spite of all Shaw's literary skill, and has been, and probably will be, uninfluential. There are, however, a few passages of peculiar interest. There are some that are bitter from experience, for example:

Beware of enterprise: beware of public spirit: beware of conscience and visions of the future. Play for

safety. . . . Nobody understands except a few students whose books nobody else reads, and here and there a prophet crying in the wilderness and being either ignored by the press or belittled as a crank.

Speaking of "we" as of possessors of lucrative talent or charm, he says,

the harm we do by our conceit and tantrums and jealousies and spoiltness is narrowly limited to the unfortunate few who are in personal contact with us.

Then Shaw declares what he conceives to be his real function :

I am by profession what is called an original thinker, my business being to question and test all the established creeds and codes to see how far they are still valid and how far worn out or superseded, and even to draft new creeds and codes.

In restating his arguments for equality of income, he stresses the point that inequality creates vested interests.

*The Intelligent Woman's Guide* was published in handsome form—excellent type, binding designed by Cockerell, and up-to-date picture dust-wrapper.

Writing under date May 15, 1928, Shaw told a correspondent: "My secretary has just unearthed a beginning of a novel in 1888, which, were not my own handwriting against me, I could swear I never wrote, saw, conceived, nor heard of in my life."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Some Bibliographical Notes on the Novels of George Bernard Shaw*, by Maurice Holmes.

## 1929: "THE APPLE CART"

In 1929 Shaw produced *The Apple Cart*. When he began to write it, he got first a conversation bringing out the type of man who is actuated by symbols instead of by the real things. As the play developed, this was not followed up, but Shaw found that it served the same purpose as an overture to a Mozart work, and left it. Shaw's main point in the play would appear to be that democracy is so far from being the solution of the problem of government that it is very desirable to have in the government of a country, not only a civil service, but an independent element that is not dependent on democracy, and that, of course, it is the quality of the manhood or womanhood in the offices of power that really matters. As an interlude to what is practically a cabinet meeting of which the play consists, Shaw objectifies the fact that a good and able man can be really innocent and yet be "compromised"; he objectifies a type of woman whose "cheek" is "sublime," and he pays tribute to the motherly woman—really based on Mrs. Shaw, and Shaw's tribute to his wife is a fine and moving one. England has values, he also urges, that ought to be saved from being swamped by America.

This play of Shaw's was a great surprise to his political friends. Here was a man who, it had been understood, was a strong advocate of democracy, exposing it to ridicule; a man who, it had been understood, was a strong critic of social aristocracy, and

therefore of monarchy, making a king the hero of the play; a man who, it had been understood, was a strong critic of England, apparently sentimental over her.

But, as we have seen, Shaw had been critical of democracy from his earliest writings; he was always clear-eyed enough to see that, while it is important to discover that human quality can be born in poverty, it can also be born in position; and only a superficial consideration of Shaw could have overlooked the fact that his criticism of England was founded on his appreciation of her.

What we know of the genesis of *The Apple Cart* illustrates a truth about the genesis of his plays in general. He has written that "the result always shows that there has been *something behind*, all the time, of which I was not conscious, though it turns out to be the real motive of the whole creation." At the time of the publication of *The Apple Cart*, few people could have predicted that the leaders of Labour and Socialist thought in England would within a few years have come publicly to disown democracy, that, within a few years, several Cabinet ministers would have gone into the City, that voting at elections would drop, within a few years, to as low as 25 per cent of the electorate in some constituencies.

In 1929 Shaw was induced to allow to be published the correspondence between Ellen Terry and himself.

Mr. Gordon Craig, Ellen Terry's son, had publicly alleged that Shaw had a motive of jealousy of Henry Irving which reflected on Shaw. With characteristic scrupulousness, Shaw, before allowing the letters to be published, submitted the issue to a nun, a friend of his, and to a well-known soldier, also a friend. The publication of the correspondence has redounded everywhere to the credit of Shaw and all who have heard it have been touched by the last sentence of his preface:

Let those who may complain that it was all on paper remember that only on paper has humanity yet achieved glory, beauty, truth, knowledge, virtue, and abiding love.

As we have seen, Shaw has an itch that other people's affairs should be managed efficiently. A hostess said to Frank Harris, " You invite him down to your place because you think he will entertain your guests with his brilliant conversation ; and before you know where you are, he has chosen a school for your son, made your will for you, regulated your diet, and assumed all the privileges of your family solicitor, your housekeeper, your clergyman, your doctor, your dressmaker, your hairdresser, and your estate agent."

In 1929 Shaw wrote to Harris :

I too in my nonage was occasionally wanting in respect to people of cruder tastes and blunter wits than myself. Now it is hard enough on other people to know that you think you know more than they do.

It is not possible for the most vigilantly considerate man of high talent to go through the world without moving those who feel at a disadvantage with him to furious moments of hatred and envy.

Shaw's broadcast address in 1929 on democracy illustrates his illuminating power:

I am going to ask you to begin our study of Democracy by considering it first as a big balloon, filled with gas or hot air, and sent up so that you shall be kept looking up whilst other people are picking your pockets. When the balloon comes down to earth every five years or so, you are invited to get into the basket if you can throw out one of the people who are sitting tightly in it; but as you can afford neither the time nor the money, and there are forty millions of you and hardly room for six hundred in the basket, the balloon goes up again with much the same lot in it and leaves you where you were before.

If a method could be applied for discovering governing ability, says Shaw,

you could form panels of persons eligible for the different grades of political work: for example, Panel A, persons capable of diplomacy and finance; Panel B, persons capable of general congress work as representatives; Panel C, of state legislature representation; Panel D, municipal affairs; Panel E, village councils; and so on. You would then let your voters elect to congress from Panel B, to state legislatures from Panel C; to city corporations from Panel D; and when they had elected these bodies within these limits, you could limit the cabinet to Panel A.

At the end of 1929 a dinner in Shaw's honour was promoted in New York and Shaw was invited. His reply was as follows:

A dinner!

How horrible!

I am to be made the pretext for killing all those wretched animals and birds and fish!

Thank you for nothing.

Now if it were to be a fast instead of a feast: say a solemn three days abstention from corpses in my honour, I could at least pretend to believe it was disinterested.

Blood sacrifices are not in my line.

To an utterance like this from Shaw there are common reactions: for example, that it is in bad taste, that it is a joke, that he is trying to be clever and funny. The truth is that it is a simple straightforward utterance, setting up values as Shaw believes them as against conventional ones.

### 1930

In 1930 Shaw wrote a preface to a new edition of *Fabian Essays* which has passages of revelation. He argues that what has been going on, politically and economically, has been "an attempt to gain the benefits of Socialism under Capitalism" and that it threatens bankruptcy rather than the millennium.

When, as at present, the work of organizing civilization outgrows the scope and capacity of private adventurers and their personal interests, the first symptom of excessive strain is an abnormal increase of unemployment accompanied by reconstructions and amalgamations of commercial businesses.

When people find themselves at a dead end, says Shaw, they resort to either revolution or dictatorship. The party system must be scrapped. There must be established an adequate division of labour and specialization of function among our rulers. It is now not a question merely of regional councils but of additional central parliaments, with "home rule" for England and Scotland.

In 1930 Elgar dedicated the *Severn Suite* to Shaw.

On November 14, 1930, lecturing to the Art-Workers' Guild, Shaw said:

It is no use talking of holding the mirror up to Nature; that is no good. The dramatist must present life more intelligently than that: he must make his characters think of something that has not been thought of before.

In this year, 1930, Shaw recounted how he had been impressed by the potentialities of the natives of Africa armed with European weapons and said:

I myself would prefer to see both whites and blacks taught some creed that would be credible both in scientific Europe and unsophisticated Africa.

#### 1931: "TOO TRUE TO BE GOOD"

By 1931 Shaw had completed *Too True to be Good*. This play is of the same category as *Heartbreak House*;

it expresses Shaw's nearest approach to despair in view of the futility of human beings. He emphasizes the fact that the old atheism and agnosticism and materialism have been undermined: the representative of these types is in the category of those who have lost their faiths. Breaking through is the mystic word of God that inspires the pure in heart like Bunyan, so that he can prophesy in words that express the truth of to-day and warn people to flee from the wrath to come. The futility of human beings who are merely "free" is expressed in Carlylean realism. The play is deep tragedy, yet intermingled in it is comedy, with the appearance of farce: minor matters are satirized. For one of the characters, Colonel Lawrence, a friend of Shaw, is used in his rôle of Private. This play illustrates the truth of the observation of the hostess to Frank Harris about Shaw: in one and the same play he will deal with the treatment of disease, of doctors, nurses, burglars, clergymen, agnostics, the idle rich, and so on.

The first performance of this play, at Malvern, was held up for over an hour awaiting the arrival of critics who, coming by aeroplane, had been delayed. Some of them had suffered from sickness. As one of them alighted he said, "I am going to bash Shaw."

In the run in London, *Too True to be Good* was drawing £1,000 a week when it was taken off—a grim commentary on the costs of running a play in London.

This latest play by Shaw confirmed, so it appeared

to the present writer, the fact that Shaw's ultimate philosophy, fine as it is, has to take a step he has not taken except in the speech of the dying Indian recorded in *John Bull's Other Island*. Shaw has tried to keep his philosophy, taking this life as the main stage of the universe, but *Too True to be Good* points to the next step, the recognition that this is a *fallen* world, and that there is a higher and better reality in what is to us now invisible.

1932: "THE ADVENTURES OF THE BLACK GIRL IN HER  
SEARCH FOR GOD"

Held up in Africa for five weeks, Shaw was inspired to write this tale. His intention was to write a play, but he found himself writing a story instead. As this little book aroused much controversy in certain circles and some searching of heart, it may be worth while to go into its antecedents.

It was an old conviction of Shaw's that the most important fact in the world is that there is not a single credible religion in it: religion, in Shaw's conviction, is the most important thing. Satirists are people who, having failed to get at the people they wanted to get at, have told a story, won them to read the story, and have therein made them to think furiously. Long ago, when H. M. Stanley showed Shaw some letters from black folk, Shaw's first question to him was "Are they armed?" During the Great War, he was alarmed at the arming of African natives. He came to believe that natives of Africa might be a

possible dominant race of the future. As such, a negress is introduced into *Back to Methuselah*. Shaw felt that our colour prejudice in thinking of the Africans ought to be combated. On the occasion of his visit to Africa in 1932, he was impressed again. Hence the Black Girl as the protagonist: she represents the unsophisticated mind of the future.

The fact that this little book was written instead of a play should remind us that things are said in a play that are not to be taken as the very own views of the author. As regards the teaching of the book, there is nothing new in it: Shaw had himself said it all before. His method characteristically includes humour. Now humour in connexion with religion is to many an offence, but Shaw has this in common with Chesterton the Catholic, that both agree that robust faith can laugh in religion. Let us remember Shaw's saying, "Humour in connexion with religion is the one taste atheists have in common with saints: it is your hopelessly irreligious churchgoer who is shocked at hearing sacred things spoken lightly of."

The great obstacle to the modernization of thought is, of course, the herd instinct. "The inertia of tradition and public opinion," Professor Elliot Smith has written, "and the lack of courage to defy them when evidence fails to conform to them, seem to be potent to blind all but the ablest and most fearless of men to the most patent facts."

To make impression as against this inertia and opposition, Shaw, as we have seen, had long before

come to the conclusion that one must be definitely provocative :

In this world, if you do not say a thing in an irritating way, you may just as well not say it at all, since nobody will trouble themselves about anything that does not trouble them. The attention given to a criticism is in direct proportion to its indigestibility.

In the book the black girl represents the virgin mind. It does not give Shaw's views of God and Jesus, but his views of the views of God and Jesus that are presented to the virgin mind. What is happening is that the Bible is put into the hands of children and other persons without the historical knowledge about the Bible. This is done in the missionary field.

Critics of the book have pointed out contemptuously that the modernism in it has been a commonplace in theological colleges for so many years. This has been exaggerated. The truth is that it is well within the present century that, first, the historical view of the Old Testament crept into orthodox colleges, and historical views of the New Testament have but slowly followed. But Shaw's real point is that what ministers of religion learnt in their theological colleges they have not adequately imparted to their pupils. There is great difference between the people who have passed through theological colleges and the general public. It is amazing to find a person like Canon Streeter writing the article on *The Black Girl* he wrote for *The News-Letter*, in which he snubbed

Shaw for not knowing that *Micah* came historically before *Job*! Of course, Shaw has known this for long enough: the point is that to the unsophisticated reader of the Bible, *Job* comes before *Micah*.

Shaw, as we have seen, has always been interested in the aesthetically physical side of books and has kept an eye on the book trade. *The Black Girl* came out very short. Shaw had it furnished with woodcuts by a competent artist and issued as an art book at half-a-crown, although it is said that the first edition cost six shillings per copy to produce. The woodcuts, in harmony with a prevailing style and with the text, show the black girl nude. Shaw has repeatedly acted on the principle that secrecy aids the worse side of sex.

In the book Shaw deals with missionaries in a manner that has been complained of: but those who know missionaries know that they are real men and women not so very different from the rest of us. Shaw knows the fact of the adaptation of Christianity to missionary exigencies.

In dealing with religion Shaw, surely most properly, stresses the problem of cruelty in Nature. He has of course real sympathy with animals. Is God responsible for the cruelty in Nature? If not, why does it exist? Shaw's answer is that the only conceivable explanation must be: because God can't help it. A god who should create a less good thing than he could, Shaw has told us explicitly, he, Shaw, would despise. (Parenthetically, it may be pointed

out that Shaw's answer is not the only one: the cruelty in Nature may be due, as in Indian theory, to fallen souls.)

In the book Shaw is out to smash ideas of God that are still being taught out of the Bible. As Christianity is taught, Jehovah is still identified with God. Let us remember what Shaw wrote about the Jehovah of the Boers at the time of the Boer War: "Jehovah makes change of mind impossible and stands for the false categories of moral good and evil in nature and consequently for implacable war, punishment, enmity, aggression and repression. . . . Jehovah is mighty, for he has his chains in men's minds."

Shaw goes through the Bible dealing with the different presentations of God offered. To the main argument of the God of *Job* the black girl retorts that "It isn't an argument: it's a sneer." The Gods of Ecclesiastes and Micah are found not to be adequate. But Shaw, with characteristic balance, deals also with the inadequate gods of to-day: he satirizes most effectively Pavlov as symbolizing vivisection. He deals with the worship of force—the god of the Roman Empire.

The head and front of Shaw's offending are of course that when the black girl has presented to her the orthodox view of Jesus, it reminds her of a conjurer. Needless to say, it has been vigorously denied that Jesus is presented in a way that lends verisimilitude to the black girl's impression. And yet in schools in general and in churches in general the miracle

stories are read in a manner that leaves on the unsophisticated mind the impression of a conjurer. *The Times* Saturday articles on religion are well known and widely admired—republished in book form. The article for January 14, 1933, began as follows:

Our Lord's first miracle at the Marriage in Cana of Galilee has been a favourite subject of religious art; and has been the text of many sermons. But one point, which distinguishes it from His other miracles, seems to have been little noticed by commentators; and that is the apparent triviality of the occasion. The Divine power over Nature of Him, without Whom was not anything made that was made, is here employed merely to save the feelings of a host who had neglected to make adequate provision of wine for a marriage feast, and would have been humiliated by the disappointment of his guests. It might well, at first sight, offend the reader's sense of proportion, if no more than that, to find the power which was to heal the leper, to feed the multitude, to raise the dead, and to still the tempest, solving what was after all not more than an unpleasant social difficulty. No such doubt appears to have crossed the mind of the Evangelist who wrote: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him"; nor the mind of the Church which has chosen the record of that manifestation as the Gospel for the second Sunday after the Epiphany.

Is not this the very style satirized in *The Fair Haven*? On the unsophisticated mind would not the impression be that of a conjurer?

In *The Times* for February 22, 1933, appeared a letter from a Vicar, in which he said:

When visiting the galleries of Rome and Florence I searched in vain for a picture of Christ which would appeal to a man of action. The expression was invariably effeminate and disappointing. May not the same appeal be made to poets and hymn-writers? One need only look through the hymns selected for the Army Prayer-book to realize how few hymns we have which really inspire spiritual activity. Our prayers, too, need revision.

In the book Shaw insists on taking Jesus as real. Shaw finds him an inadequate representation of God: he believes that Jesus did conceive of himself as the Messiah and was mistaken. A mere gospel of love is not enough: Shaw, for example, is not a pacifist: Shaw points out the inadequacy of the metaphor of father for God: he protests against a teaching of love that does not secure the independence of the soul. "What is heaven?" he asks. "It is glory. It is the home of God and his thoughts." Christians talk of love but hate each other. They ignore the need of solitude, of the spiritual truth in the saying that the only Golden Rule is that there is no Golden Rule. The churches are largely mere human sects. Millenarianism still flourishes.

But again Shaw brings in his satire against sceptics, modern scientists who take it as gospel that life can exist only on this earth, that acquired characters are not inherited.

Meanwhile man is committing suicide. Christ is

being used as an amulet and the real power of Jesus is hampered. The proof of this is the offerings at church services—they prove how much people value the religion.

Shaw does not limit himself to Christianity among the historic religions : he deals also with Islam. Moreover he extends the scope of religion, pointing out that the artist is a servant of God creating beauty.

Religion is not the descent of God, as in orthodox Christianity, but the ascent of man to God. Sex is to be overcome. People learn of reality by doing the work of the world that calls to be done, but they ought to have their vision quickened. We hate the highest when we see it—Socrates, Jesus, Joan of Arc. We are not alive to the awfulness of God, of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Shaw introduces his own theology: the God of evolution is experimenting: mistakes survive: man is called upon to take the great responsibilities of moulding the world. God is both inside and outside.

Now in relation to false views of God, Shaw maintains that it is not enough to “prove all things”: we must “hold fast that which is good”—and also *get rid of that which is false*: get rid of the dirty water before you substitute the clean: put the new wine into new skins.

Shaw also repeats his strong opposition on moral grounds to “Crosstianity.”

The reception of *The Black Girl* was instructive.

The religious press attacked it with venom and gave a convincing demonstration of Shaw's thesis that Christians in general do not love their supposed enemies, do good to them that hate them, and pray for them that despitefully use them and persecute them. On the contrary, the official religious reviewers descended below the standard of the secular world in their methods. The present writer came across two who read sex into the book, and they were both ministers of religion.

The best comment on the book that the present writer found was a letter to the Editor of *The Christian World*:

Has your reviewer said all that is to be said, by so responsible a religious journal as *The Christian World*, about "Mr. Shaw's Knobkerry"? I hold no brief for Bernard Shaw, who often annoys me intensely, but surely there is more than crude cleverness and "a grotesque perversion of Christianity invented by himself" in *The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God*.

For myself, I must confess to have read this little book with bated breath. Into its 75 pages is compressed an incisive repudiation of the real irreligion of much of our religion. Would to God that it were really true, Sir, that, as your reviewer confidently asserts, the Churches threw out "the dirty water"—"for the most part, a generation ago."

"The Conjuror" is not Bernard Shaw's caricature of Christ, but our own: the caricature not of Catholicism alone but of much of our Free Church preaching and hymnology. There is all the passion of the heart-searching evangelist in the answer of the Conjuror to the Arab:

"I am so utterly rejected of men that my only means of livelihood is to sit as a model to this compassionate artist who pays me sixpence an hour for stretching myself on this cross all day. . . . When he has laid in a sufficient stock of images, and I have saved a sufficient number of sixpences, I take a holiday and go about giving people good advice and telling them wholesome truths."

Is it not true—terribly, pathetically true—that Christ has survived in our Churches rather as a sacred mystery to be adored than as a Master to be followed?

If we will accept it so, Sir, I venture to suggest that here is a tract for the times which presents a searching challenge to us all. And if, as I agree, there be "dirty water" here in this fable too, for God's sake let us not throw away the clean as well.—Yours,

ALAN BALDING.

Fulham, S.W.

Shaw's provocative methods were thoroughly justified. By pointing out things he wanted to be repudiated, he got them repudiated. The adverse reviews, the banning of the book from public libraries, as at Cambridge, increased the sales, so that the book became notable for its outstanding success.

#### 1933: SHAW'S LECTURE IN NEW YORK: GILBERT MURRAY'S DEDICATION

In the course of a world cruise during the winter 1932-3, Shaw came to the United States. Out of innumerable invitations to give public addresses, he elected to give one in New York under the auspices of the American Academy of Political Science on April

11, 1933. He courageously addressed himself to offering the best fundamental political and economic advice he could to the United States in particular and the world in general. He had the courage to expose in very strong terms the fallacies (1) that absence of limitation of individuals' actions provides freedom (whereas it has delivered many into the hands of uncontrolled tyrants); that it is for a country to secure excess of exports over imports (whereas this is to get a balance of paper money and lose real wealth); (3) that prices ought to be raised (whereas food and clothing should be produced as cheap as possible).

Shaw drew attention to the fact that in recent years scholars like Petrie have provided a history of civilization from which we can learn that we are at the stage in the life-history of a civilization at which all the preceding ones have broken down. Whether we are to allow ours to break down depends on our moral response and how we apply it.

Financiers have fallen into the fallacy of money representing fictitious capital as against production of real wealth and the world is being run by financiers. (Shaw's warning here significantly agreed with that of the President of the British Association in September.) The craze for money returns leads to the hunger for foreign markets which in turn leads to war.

Each country must work out the *method* of its salvation in forms suited to itself.

This address of Shaw's was published under the title *The Political Madhouse in America and Nearer Home*

with a preface completed in July, in which he applies the address to Britain and other countries.

For the autumn is announced a volume of three plays with prefaces, containing *Too True to be Good*, *The Village Wooing* and *On the Rocks*.

In 1933 Gilbert Murray published his book on Aristophanes and dedicated it to Shaw:

TO MY OLD FRIEND  
G.B.S.

LOVER OF IDEAS AND HATER OF CRUELTY WHO HAS FILLED  
MANY LANDS WITH LAUGHTER  
AND  
WHOSE COURAGE HAS NEVER FAILED

It is remarkable that in his preface Murray wrote as follows:

In times like these one often longs for the return to earth of one of the great laughing philosophers of the past. In the War one longed for a breath of Voltaire to show the madness of men and the unhealthy superstitions in which they were nursed, or for Erasmus to induce them for a space to be gentle and honest with one another, and to think a moment or two before they struck or lied. But for many years I have wished quite particularly for Aristophanes, and wondered whether, like the great men who rise from the dead in two of his own comedies, he could bring us later generations some help. Could he fight against our European war-fevers

and nationalisms as he fought against those of his own country, facing unpopularity—facing death, if it must be—yet always ready with his gallant laughter and never collapsing into spitefulness or mere self-pity? He might do it, if only the Fascisti and Nazis and Ogpus could refrain from killing him, and the British authorities from forbidding him to land in England. The world badly needs a man of genius who could make whole nations listen to him, and who would at the same time fight for the great causes that seem now so nearly lost, for generosity and kindness between nations and classes, for poetry and high culture—and even for something which the ancients called Piety—in the individual life.

The foregoing pages have been written in vain if they have not shown that Shaw answers to the description here written.

### SHAW'S METHOD OF WRITING PLAYS

Shaw has stated that he never sees a page ahead when he is writing a play, and that he fearlessly lets his inspiration lead his thought to apparent impossibilities, knowing by experience that a way out will always open at the last moment, as, for instance, the dream epilogue to *Saint Joan* solved the apparently insoluble problem of presenting Joan's historical future and its significance in a fifteenth-century scene.<sup>1</sup> In nearly all his plays he introduces "lightness of heart, without which nothing can succeed in the theatre."<sup>2</sup>

### SHAW AS PLAY-PRODUCER

Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson wrote:

Mr. Bernard Shaw was by far the best among the playwrights who attempted to stage manage their plays, and of the old brigade I knew them all, from Charles Reade and Tom Taylor down.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Ayliff has said that the directions given in the printed versions are absolutely right.<sup>4</sup>

Shaw's method of production were described by him in a letter to McNulty which was published in the

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 468

<sup>2</sup> Shaw's preface to Lillah McCarthy's *Myself and My Friends*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Henderson, 1931, quoted in Henderson, 1932, p. 306.

<sup>4</sup> *Barry Jackson and the London Theatre*, by G. W. Bishop, p. 26.

American *Collier's Weekly*, June 24, 1922, and was reprinted in pamphlet form in America in 1928. They show his great consideration for the actors and actresses, and those who have acted in his plays produced by him are warm in their appreciation.

#### SHAW AS TEACHER

It is commonly objected to Shaw that he has been destructive. The facts, as narrated in this little book, refute this contention overwhelmingly. Lillah McCarthy has a notable passage in her *Myself and My Friends* in this connexion:

The discoverers; the adventurous-minded, Wells, Lloyd George, Nansen, all flying men, all finding their way by losing it. Asquith, Sidney Webb, sure men, tracing a new way with cautious step or seeking to know the future by appealing to the past. And Shaw, the greatest middleman who ever lived, building a new world out of the crumbling debris of the old. Bringing together, summing up and interpreting the experience of the past, and marrying it with new thoughts whereby may be begotten the new world of the future. The Linnaeus of literature! As the great Swedish naturalist took all the planks and loose stones of knowledge, sawn or hewn by those who went before him, and built up a splendid new temple of knowledge, so Shaw. He stands in the middle-way—between the adventurous-minded and the safe and sure men.<sup>1</sup>

There is little doubt that Shaw's conscious effort has been mainly directed to the prevention of suffering

<sup>1</sup>pp. 144-5.

and the production of the full life. "Though my trade is that of a playwright," he has written, "my vocation is that of a prophet";<sup>1</sup> and again, "I suspect and hope that most of my readers are unconscious of my literary virtuosity and keen on my ideas." William James wrote of him that his great value was his demonstration that "you can tell the truth successfully if you will only keep benignant enough while doing it." His successful method here has sprung from what he has written of as "the enormous fund of joyousness which is the secret of genius."

As a teacher, Shaw has found it to be his business, not only to present positive truths, but to get people to discard lumber from their minds: the gardener not only plants but weeds. The difficulty, he has said, is not that people will not accept ideas because they are new—they are only too ready to do so: the difficulty is that they do not co-ordinate their beliefs and scrap those that are superseded.

#### PERSONALIA

Writing to his biographer, Shaw said:

Point out . . . that the real George Bernard Shaw was born into the world not by parthenogenesis but in the vulgar way, and inherited all the weaknesses, follies, and limitations of his kind—that he goes about on two legs, blowing his nose and failing and fudging along as best he can in an extremely prosaic way, perceptibly short of

<sup>1</sup> *Malvern Festival Book*, 1932, quoted in *Barry Jackson and the London Theatre*, p. 144.

many accomplishments which are fairly common, and in some ways an obviously ignorant, stupid, and unready man.<sup>1</sup>

He has assessed values in life with a thoroughness that few have attained to and has had the courage to act upon the results. For example, he has written, "I have lived and worked without flesh, fish, fowl, tea, coffee, tobacco, or spirits."<sup>2</sup> Shaw's biographer testifies that Shaw never swears, apart from an occasional "Damn" and "Good God"; "he is the arch foe of everything dirty, mean, and cruel."<sup>3</sup> "Suggestiveness and sex appeal in the offensive sense never dare to show their face in his presence. Shaw is in no sense a prude; but he would as soon tell a story smuttily or leave Frank Harris's autobiography on his drawing-room table as commit murder."<sup>4</sup>

The testimony of all Shaw's friends is of the warmest. I have talked with several of them intimately about him. In my early days of acquaintance I asked Wicksteed what he thought of Shaw and he said simply, "He is my friend; I love him." Henderson's testimony is borne out by that of Mr. St. John Ervine:

Mr. Henderson assures us that many women

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 31. Cp. Butler, *Notebooks*: "My most intimate friends are men of more insight, quicker wit, more playful fancy and, in all ways, abler men than I am, but you will find ten of them for one of me. I note what they say, think it over, adapt it, and give it permanent form. They throw good things off like sparks; I collect them and turn them into warmth. But I could not do this if I did not sometimes throw out a spark or two myself."

<sup>2</sup> A similar abstemiousness characterized two of the ablest men I have known, the late Philip Wicksteed and Professor Gilbert Murray.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 665.

<sup>4</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 29.

have pursued Mr. Shaw, but the information makes no more impression on our minds than if he had told us that the differential calculus had walked out with the Albert Memorial. . . . We can applaud the platform figure, but who would dare to clap him on the back and call him "old chap!"? . . . I can be saucier to him than most people, but only in print. I haven't the nerve to be saucy to him when we meet. I would as soon think of ragging the Himalayas as of ragging Mr. Shaw to his face. I would not dare to say "damn" to him, and if I were to utter the word "bloody" in his presence, I should, so to speak, say it as a quotation from one of his plays.<sup>1</sup>

Sir A. W. Pinero wrote:

It is among the misfortunes of my long life that I have not been brought into close association with Mr. Shaw. But, like so many others, I have received at his hands numerous acts of kindness, consideration, and good-will. I count Mr. Shaw as one of the most generous of men.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Edward Elgar said on one occasion:

Some people had thought his friend Shaw a little angry at times and a little fierce. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Shaw was a most remarkable man; he was the best friend to any artist, the kindest and possibly the dearest fellow on earth.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. St. John Ervine, in the article just quoted from, shows how Shaw is in real life the Caesar he depicted in *Caesar and Cleopatra*:

I do not know any man who is more equable and

<sup>1</sup> In *The Observer*, December 11, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 344.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 1929, August 19.

genial in his temper than Mr. Shaw. . . . He does not fly into a rage. His abuse is impersonal. He bears no malice. He forgives. He is charitable. . . . His forbearance, his extraordinary lack of any vindictive quality puts him out of our understanding. . . . For my part, I love the man this side of idolatry.

#### SHAW AS CRITIC

Mr. Fuller Maitland wrote of an utterance of Shaw on music, "it earned the lasting gratitude of his humble colleague."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Middleton Murry wrote that Shaw has been labelled the paradoxical playwright and this label leaves no room for the facts that he is "the best living writer of plain English prose and the most original and profound of literary critics. . . . Shaw is a better critic of Shakespeare than Goethe or Coleridge. But there is no room for this on the label. All that it will bear is the legend, 'Better than Shakespeare?' . . . And the other day Mr. Ezra Pound declared that he was 'ninth-rate.' A ninth-rate playwright? A ninth-rate prose writer? A ninth-rate critic? Then, oh, to be a tenth-rater in any of these things!"

Mr. James Agate has said that Shaw's *Dramatic Opinions and Essays* is the finest text-book of dramatic art extant.

#### SHAW'S KNOWLEDGE

Similarly a reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* wrote:

<sup>1</sup> *A Doorkeeper of Music*, p. 186.

The enormous amount of information on which Mr. Shaw bases his opinions has time and again been proved to be of scrupulous accuracy. That his versatility of thought owes both its vigour and practical character to what must be ultimately described as imaginative power is perhaps obvious; but that fact should not distract attention from the variety of his scientific studies and the breadth of his knowledge of history, art, and philosophy.

#### SHAW AS DRAMATIST

On this subject a reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* wrote:

"It might be said of Shaw's plays," Mr. Galsworthy remarks, "that he creates characters who express feelings that they have not got." Sometimes this is unhappily true. The resulting characters are sticks of propaganda, the voice-pieces of a platform orator. But it is more often true that Mr. Shaw creates characters who express feelings which, in life, they could not or would not express. In this sense Mr. Shaw's drama is unnatural and conventional; but his is a liberating convention. When once we have learnt to accept it, it reveals to us a complexity of environment and a subtlety of spirit which naturalistic dialogue could never reveal.

Realism will not suffice. It is not the function of art to hold the mirror up to nature in the sense of reproducing real life. Suppose one put on the stage an ordinary drawing-room conversation: why go and pay to witness what we can witness without the expenditure? The truth is that the artist is capable of quintessential life and communicates this. What is

requisite in the method of communication is not realism but verisimilitude. So Shaw creates the illusion that you are witnessing real life, but in fact it is quintessence of life, with "real" people saying what they would say if they could. The action is not limited to physical action. Even in real life most effects on people are wrought through speech—or, as Stevenson pointed out, by silence: it is possible for one to keep his mouth shut and yet to come out of the room a liar and a traitor. In Shaw's plays, action is largely spiritual action: people are affected and altered by it: they change in the action of the play.

If Shaw's dramatic writings are not dramatic, it is remarkable that they should have been acted with warm appreciation by Ellen Terry, Forbes Robertson, Granville Barker, Sorma, Arnold Daly, Richard Mansfield, Cedric Hardwicke, in Germany, the United States, Scandinavia, Poland, Hungary, Russia, Belgium, Holland, Italy, the Argentine, Spain, and France, as well as in Britain. Mr. Drinkwater dedicated *Oliver Cromwell* to Shaw "with homage to the master dramatist of his age and with the gratitude that is his due from every younger writer for the English theatre." Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson has said that *Saint Joan* is the greatest tragedy since Shakespeare.

#### SHAW'S BLIND SPOT

There is only one thing in Shaw that I do not understand, and that is, in spite of all his sensitiveness, compassion and kindness, a streak of insensitiveness.

Examples have been given above. I have discussed this streak with several who have known him intimately. They have immediately recognized what I indicated, and they too could not understand it. In one case, that of a lady, she told me that she herself had raised the difficulty with an Irishman of authority and he said, "Oh, don't you understand that? That's Irish: we can't help it." Shaw's biographer says that in Shaw there is a streak of macabre humour which, outside Ireland, seems inconsistent with humanitarianism.

#### WILL SHAW SURVIVE?

The best utterance on this issue is implied in Shaw's own on the dating of plays, given above. The next best is, perhaps, contained in Mr. St. John Ervine's review of Shaw's biography from which we have already quoted:

There are some very juvenile persons who now attempt to belittle him, and I hear persons with tow-wits downrightly announcing that the Shavian drama will not live. Their audacity in declaring what posterity will or will not admire leaves me, a fairly audacious person myself, dumbfounded. Yet, even if Mr. Shaw does not survive, it is surely something to have lived as magnificently and vitally as he has done in his own time! The majority of people appear to have died on the day they were born, and make us wonder if the undertakers are on strike. But Bernard Shaw was born alive and has grown more and more alive, until to-day the whole world tingles with its mere contact with him. I should be content with that much life, and should contemplate happily the prospect of being forgotten after my death.

But I am disinclined to believe that this remarkable man will out, out like a brief candle. Somewhere in the corridors of time, his flame will still flare. His influence and effect on his generation have been enormous. He has caused more people to exercise their wits than any other man or woman in the past fifty years. His courage and his frankness, his devastating candour and fearless announcement of the truth as he sees it, these have made him a beacon in a dark time.

Mr. Agate, on the occasion of the production of *The Apple Cart* in London in September, 1929, said that Shaw "is the greatest mind which has done honour to the English theatre in the last three hundred years."

#### THE REAL BERNARD SHAW

Those who know Shaw best agree with his biographer that

Shaw is always tolerant of sincerity, always sympathetic with true effort, unrestrainedly enthusiastic over any vital outpouring of the human spirit; rebuking tyranny wherever he sees it, exposing falsehood when he hears it, eternally vigilant in exposing frauds and unmasking shams. And yet, with all his plain speaking, vehemence and confidence, gentle-hearted, compassionate, and, in the presence of beauty, deeply humble.<sup>1</sup>

To most people Shaw is the writer of clever stage pieces with more or less witty and humorous dialogue, whose characters are not true to life but are marionettes who talk out Mr. Shaw's views on this,

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1911, p. 68.

that, or the other subject that he takes it into his head to write about: he thinks out unexpected things to say that run counter to the received ideas on the subject, that shock people who hold received views: he has attacked the most sacred things in life—religion, the family, the nation: he will say or do anything to be in the limelight, glorying in shameless egotism—a buffoon.

The truth in this we have tried to exhibit in its true light: it is commonly seen in a false one. The fact is (to use a classical phrase) that Shaw has been and is a distinguished philosopher, artist, statesman, publicist, humanitarian, critic of music, art, and literature, of the highest integrity and probity, a prophet, a mystic, a saint.

#### SHAW'S PHILOSOPHY

As philosopher Shaw has insisted that Butler's philosophy is true in showing how mind is *prius* to "matter"; that life is to be found in life itself according to the *quality* of living attained; that the problem of evil is to be solved by believing that the God of evolution is experimenting. "My mind is so constituted," Shaw once said, "that if I could conceive a god as deliberately creating something less than himself, I should class him as a cad. If he were simply satisfied with himself, I should class him as a lazy coxcomb. *My* god must be continually striving to surpass himself."

The mistakes of evolution, Shaw points out,

survive, and man finds himself called upon to take the great responsibilities of consciously moulding the world; the true joy in life is to be found in the conviction that one is being used for a purpose higher than one's own. "Like flies to wanton boys are we to the gods," says Shakespeare: "they kill us for their sport." Like pawns in the great game of life are we to God, says Shaw: He uses us for His own great purposes.<sup>1</sup>

We have submitted Shaw's philosophy to criticism above. Another and better view appears to consist in the recognition that the "real" universe is a fallen world created by fallen souls some of whom are striving to attain to the God from whom they have fallen.

In any case, in a letter Shaw wrote to Tolstoy, who had expressed the desire to know about *Blanco Posnet*, he expressed his "ultimate" views as perhaps nowhere better:

We are ashamed to be good boys at school, ashamed to be gentle and sympathetic instead of violent and revengeful, ashamed to confess that we are very timid animals instead of reckless idiots—in short, ashamed of everything that ought to be the basis of our self-respect. . . . The man who believes that there is a purpose in the universe and identifies his own purposes with it and makes the achievement of that purpose an act, not of self-sacrifice for himself, but of self-realization: that is the effective and happy man. He is the man who will combine with you in a fellowship which you may call the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. . . . It is the intention of the universe that we should be like God.

<sup>1</sup> Henderson, 1932, p. 528.

As I have said above, I hope very much that the need for an epitaph for Mr. Shaw may be delayed indefinitely, but I believe I have discovered what his epitaph ought to be, in words uttered by one of his own characters :

I have been myself; I have not been afraid of myself; and now I have escaped from myself and am become a voice for them that are afraid to speak, and a cry for the hearts that break in silence.



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